$3.75

FIRST THINGS

April 1991
Number 12

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

The Decline and Fall of the Christian College
James Tunstead Burtchaell

Israel Among the Nationalisms
Robert A. Licht

An Anatomy of Sexual Ethics
Philip Turner

History in the Past Perfect
Elizabeth Kristol

The Rich, the Poor, and Reaganomics
Michael Novak

Also: The Churches and the War • The Vatican and the State of Israel • Where Democracy Came From When Nice People Do Bad Theology

Reviews and Opinion: Jean Elshtain on Christopher Lasch Dean C. Curry • James Finn • Paul V. Mankowski • Ben F. Meyer

0 73361 64655 2 04

Richard John Neuhaus

The Public Square

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

How many of these conservative classics are still missing from your library?

Take one FREE.

Or, if you prefer, take TWO free. Values to $69.95

2730 THE CONSERVATIVE MIND — *Russell Kirk*. New 7th Edition of "the best and clearest exposition of the conservative philosophy."—James J. Kilpatrick. **$19.95**

2550 WITNESS — *Whittaker Chambers*. Eloquent autobiography of the man who spied for Stalin, repented and became America's chief anti-Communist witness. **$17.95**

2819 NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM: The Intellectual Origins of the Constitution — *Forrest McDonald.* Pulitzer Prize nominee by America's leading Constitutional authority (and a no-nonsense conservative). "His authority is unequaled — magisterial ... of inestimable value ... McDonald's masterpiece."—M.E. Bradford, *National Review*. "Vigorously and wittily written." —Russell Kirk, *Reflections.* **$25**

3322 THE CONSCIENCE OF A CONSERVATIVE — *Barry Goldwater; chapter-long, evocative Introduction by Patrick J. Buchanan*. Back in print, the book that gave modern conservatives their marching orders. Prophetic, and still required reading. **$17.95**

3300 BASIC COMMUNISM: Its Rise, Spread and Debacle in the 20th Century — *Clarence B. Carson*. Sweeping survey covers the origins, spread, thrust and theory — PLUS profiles of 61 top Communists. One-volume "library" includes every aspect. 575 pages. **$29.95**

2632 THE ESSAYS, ARTICLES & REVIEWS OF EVELYN WAUGH. Rich 687-page collection of 237 sparkling pieces — most never published in U.S. **$40**

2620 SUICIDE OF THE WEST — *James Burnham*. The most profound (and prophetic) insight into the liberal mind ever written. "A book ... for which the world has been aching."—Wm. F. Buckley Jr. **$18.95**

2630 LOSING GROUND — *Charles Murray*. "Has finally and unanswerably demolished both the moral and the practical claims of the welfare state." —George Gilder. "Devastating."—*National Review*. "A great book."—*Wall St. Journal*. **$23.95**

2693 THE GULAG ARCHIPELAGO, 1918-1956 — *Alexander Solzhenitsyn*. The three massive volumes of the original here masterfully abridged by Edward E. Ericson Jr. — with Solzhenitsyn's approval. The heart of the most important anti-Communist book ever written now emerges with even greater impact. Foreword and Afterword by Solzhenitsyn himself. **$25**

2554 UP FROM LIBERALISM — *Wm. F. Buckley Jr. Foreword by John Dos Passos.* Classic anti-liberal polemic reissued. "What he says and how he says it is sure...to drive the liberals to the brink of mayhem...breathtaking."—*Wall St. Journal.* **$16.95**

2966 ODYSSEY OF A FRIEND: Letters to Wm. F. Buckley Jr. 1954-1961 — *Whittaker Chambers*. Revised Edition with unpublished letters. "Compelling."—*Newsweek.* **$17.95**

2612 THE LETTERS OF EVELYN WAUGH. If letterwriting is a dying art, it expires gloriously in these 684 pages. "Dazzling."—*Time.* "Delicious." —*Newsweek.* **$25**

How to claim either one or two of these classics **FREE**

CONSERVATIVE BOOK CLUB 15 Oakland Avenue • Harrison, NY 10528

How the Club Works

Every 4 weeks (13 times a year) you get a free copy of the Club Bulletin which offers you the Featured Selection plus a good choice of Alternates — all of interest to conservatives. ★ If you want the Featured Selection, do nothing; it will come automatically. ★ If you don't want the Featured Selection, or you do want an Alternate, indicate your wishes on the handy card enclosed with your Bulletin and return it by the deadline date. ★ The majority of Club books will be offered at 20-50% discounts, plus a charge for shipping and handling. ★ As soon as you buy and pay for the number of books you agreed to buy at regular Club prices, your membership may be ended at any time, either by you or by the Club. ★ If you ever receive a Featured Selection without having had 10 days to decide if you want it, you may return it at Club expense for full credit. ★ Good service. No computers! ★ The Club will offer regular Superbargains, mostly at 70-90% discounts plus shipping and handling. Superbargains do NOT count toward fulfilling your Club obligation, but do enable you to buy fine books at giveaway prices. ★ Only one membership per household.

Please check the option you prefer

☐ Please accept my membership in the Club and send, free and postpaid, the book whose number I have written in the box below:

☐

I agree to buy 3 additional books at regular Club prices over the next 18 months. I also agree to the Club rules spelled out in this coupon.

☐ Please accept my membership in the Club and send, free and postpaid, the two books whose numbers I have written in the boxes below:

☐ ☐

I agree to buy 4 additional books at regular Club prices over the next 2 years. I also agree to the Club rules spelled out in this coupon.

FT - 11

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FIRST THINGS

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

APRIL 1991 • NUMBER 12

CORRESPONDENCE 2 *Fred W. Beuttler, Robert S. Michaelsen, Joseph A. Varacalli, George McKenna, Mike W. Perry, John W. Whitehead, Paul McGuire, Joseph M. Lynch, William Johnson Everett, Peter K. Ilchuk, Charles E. Ford*

EDITORIAL 7 How Democracy Came About and How It Might Be Sustained

OPINION 9 *Ben F. Meyer* The Philosophical Crusher, *Eugene J. Fisher* The Vatican and the State of Israel, *Kenneth E. Hunter* When Nice People Do Bad Theology

ARTICLES 16 *James Tunstead Burtchaell* The Decline and Fall of the Christian College

30 *Robert A. Licht* Israel Among the Nationalisms

36 *Philip Turner* Undertakings and Promises: An Anatomy of Sexual Ethics

43 *Elizabeth Kristol* History in the Past Perfect

50 *Michael Novak* The Rich, the Poor, and Reaganomics

BOOKS 54 *Jean Bethke Elshtain* The True and Only Heaven by Christopher Lasch; *Paul V. Mankowski* Why Catholics Can't Sing by Thomas Day; *Dean C. Curry* This Hemisphere of Liberty by Michael Novak; *James Finn* China Misperceived by Steven Mosher; Briefly Noted

THE PUBLIC SQUARE 62 A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life by *Richard John Neuhaus*

Poetry by *Luci Shaw* (35), *Lawrence Dugan* (42), *Robert Schultz* (49), and *Donna Frazier* (71)

Editor-in-Chief: *Richard John Neuhaus*
Editor: *James Nuechterlein*
Managing Editor: *Matthew Berke*
Poetry Editor: *Nathan A. Scott, Jr.*
Publisher: *Institute on Religion and Public Life*
Publishing Services: *Publishing Management Associates*

First Things (ISSN #1047-5141) is published monthly (except for combined issues June/July and August/September) for $24 per year by The Institute on Religion and Public Life, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010. Second class postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing office. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to First Things, P.O. Box 3000, Dept. FT, Denville, NJ 07834. **Editorial Offices:** The Institute on Religion and Public Life, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010. **Editorial Phone:** (212) 627-1985. **Advertising Offices:** 129 Phelps Avenue, Suite 312, Rockford, IL 61108. **Advertising Phone:** (815) 398-8569. **Subscription Department:** P.O. Box 3000, Dept. FT, Denville, NJ 07834. Unsolicited material cannot be returned unless accompanied by sufficient return postage. Newsstand distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 1130 Cleveland Rd., Sandusky, OH 44870.

Copyright ©1991 by The Institute on Religion and Public Life. All rights reserved.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FIRST THINGS

FIRST THINGS is published by Religion and Public Life, an interreligious, nonpartisan research and education institute whose purpose is to advance a religiously informed public philosophy for the ordering of society. RPL also sponsors scholars conferences, consultations, research projects, public educational events, and a fellows program.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Peter Berger
Stanley Hauerwas
Gertrude Himmelfarb
David Novak
Michael Novak
George Weigel

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Hadley Arkes
Walter Berns
Brigitte Berger
James Burtchaell
David Dalin
Thomas Derr
Jean Bethke Elshtain
James Finn
Ernest Fortin
Suzanne Garment
Mary Ann Glendon
Bruce Hafen
Carl F. H. Henry
Russell Hittinger
Leonid Kishkovsky
Christopher Lasch
Glenn Loury
Max Stackhouse

Correspondence

God & Man at College

In George Marsden's "The Soul of the American University" (January), he proposes two remedies for the decline in religious life in the university: the demand for a true pluralism and the building of an alternative higher educational system in "various Christian subcultures." As a Ph.D. candidate in History at the University of Chicago, a "seriously religious" person at a "mainline educational institution," I would like to suggest an alternative to Marsden's sectarian option.

Overall, I applaud Mr. Marsden's analysis and his call for complete pluralism in the American academy. He correctly raises the all-too-real threat of exclusion based on ideological grounds. But his call for "building research and graduate study centers in key fields at the best institutions in various Christian subcultures" is wrongheaded, for it will replicate a pattern that has excluded conservative Christians from the larger intellectual culture. If our goal is the development of an intellectually respectable Christianity, then Mr. Marsden's proposal is the wrong way to go about it.

The alternative, which Marsden hints at, is the building of these separate institutions *physically on campus* at major universities. Only in this way can we break out of our exile.

The situation in Chicago, and especially at the University of Chicago, is rather revealing of the relationship of liberal and conservative Christianity to modern intellectual culture. The Chicago area has over a dozen theological seminaries, divided into two clusters, with cross-registration privileges. The liberal divinity schools, such as Garrett Seminary and the Chicago Theological Seminary, are physically on campus at Chicago's major universities, Northwestern and the University of Chicago. The conservative schools, such as Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Northern Baptist Seminary, are scattered throughout the suburbs. In the neighborhood of the U. of Chicago, there are over a half-dozen seminaries and denominational training institutions, but not one is really conservative. Why is there no conservative Christian intellectual presence at the major Chicago universities? Is there any wonder why liberal Christianity is more intellectually engaging? How can one hope to change the soul of the university if one is not even part of the university community?

Marsden's call for separate institution building will no doubt replicate the situation at Chicago—liberal schools on campus, conservative schools spread out in the provinces. I am a graduate of one of these suburban conservative seminaries, and I can attest that most of its intellectual energy went towards internecine squabbles rather than critical engagement of modern intellectual culture. As a means of preserving the "faith once delivered," this pattern is probably useful in the short term, but if our goal is to create an intellectually respectable faith, this scattering of conservative Christian schools is disastrous. . . .

Fred W. Beuttler
University of Chicago

My initial impression of George Marsden's "The Soul of the American University" was that it was another exercise in nostalgia. Careful reading showed it to be otherwise. Given its relative brevity, it is an amazingly comprehensive analysis. Further, I was pleased that Marsden refrained from advancing what could have become another version of the decline-and-fall lament ending with a call to return to some presumably pristine past. His conclusion that some form of "pragmatic pluralism" is "the only live academic option" for a public policy in the university today strikes me as sensible. I also share his conviction that this policy "ought to be challenged to be more consistently pragmatic and pluralistic." It is good to see Professor Marsden in the ranks of the challengers.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Like most scholars, Marsden is at his best when he relies on thorough familiarity with sources. When he moves closer to the present and strays into personal impressions, however, as he does in his treatment of religious studies departments and faculty, e.g., his argument becomes shaky, simplistic, and even inaccurate. For example, his statement that "by the 1970s almost every university had" a department of religion is quite misleading. It is especially so when seen in the context of his earlier statement that "80 percent of students today" attend "government-sponsored schools." It is certainly not true that "almost every" "government-sponsored" university has a department of religion or religious studies; it is even doubtful that a majority of such institutions have such departments.

My impressions of religion departments and faculty do not match Marsden's. I have spent the major share of my professional career in such programs (fifteen years at the University of Iowa and twenty-five at the University of California, Santa Barbara). But I could not confidently accept his conclusion that "the presence of religion programs in universities is, on balance, not a countervailing force to the secularization of universities." I am prepared to mount a modest argument that such programs have helped increase levels of religious literacy among those who have taken advantage of them. I would also venture the opinion that this increase has resulted in a fuller understanding of the significance of religion in human culture—including the central role of Christianity in our own culture. (It is even quite possible that in recent years some of these students have been aided in this process by reading Professor Marsden's excellent books!)

Further, while I know a large number of the faculty associated with religion departments and programs in American universities, I do not recognize Professor Marsden's characterization of these colleagues as people who have "lost their faith" and whose goal is "to undermine the religious faith of their students." It may be true . . . that the scholarly study of religion begins with the criticism of religion. But it does not nor should it necessarily end at that point.

Indeed, it has been my experience that students often achieve what someone has called "a second level of innocence" in their religious faith as a result of such study. Their faith has become more fully undergirded by understanding. As for the professors, I pronounce no judgment other than that they be competent in their subject matter, honest with themselves and their students about their own assumptions and convictions, and that they not exploit their university connection as what the University of California statement on academic freedom calls "a platform for propaganda." . . .

Robert S. Michaelsen
Professor Emeritus
University of California,
Santa Barbara

In his superb essay, George Marsden proposes two strategies aimed at bringing religion back into the vitals of American higher education: "the first is for seriously religious people to campaign actively for universities to apply their professions of pluralism more consistently," and "the other strategy . . . is that serious Christians should concentrate on building distinctly Christian institutions that will provide alternatives to secular colleges and universities." Employing Ernest Troeltsch's sociology of religion categories, the first of Marsden's strategies is "church-like," the second is "sect-like" in nature. Let me . . . suggest that *if* there is a positive solution for seriously religious people vis-a-vis American higher education, it lies in implementing *both* strategies *simultaneously*.

Taking, for instance, the situation of Catholic higher education (to which I have a strong commitment), the growth, proliferation, and continuing success of "sectarian" institutions like Christendom College and the University of Steubenville can, perhaps, force into the public eye of Catholic America an unfavorable comparison with such alleged "Catholic" universities as Notre Dame, Fordham, and St. John's. Such a comparison might provide an "opening" for, and a strengthening of the hands of, those committed Catholics situated in the now mostly secularized Catholic institutions of higher education. The reestablishment of orthodoxy within Catholic institutions can perhaps, in turn, eventually translate into Catholic perspectives gaining the status of a respected option within non-Catholic universities and colleges. One thing, however, is pretty sure: without the application of any outside "heat" from the sectarian alternatives, the status quo is the heavy favorite for the future in both the "mainline" Catholic and non-Catholic educational institutions. The relationship, then, between Marsden's alternatives should *not* be viewed as "either-or" but as (potentially) dialectically related. . . .

Joseph A. Varacalli
Nassau Community College-SUNY
Garden City, NY

Wary of Capitalism

I am a long-time admirer of Peter Berger's work, but I have serious questions about his particular way of defending capitalism ("Capitalism and the Disorders of Modernity," January). Does it really belong in a journal devoted to transcendent religion? If one believes that the choice of religious credos is not arbitrary, or a matter of taste or utility, then why publish an essay which puts "the worship of a god represented by sauerkraut" on the same plane as the worship of—God?

I don't mean to be humorless about this. Obviously, Berger's playfulness and hyperbole are meant to drive home his central thesis, which on its face seems quite innocuous. As I understand it, his argument is that capitalism, because it makes no value judgments, leaves the greatest room for religious pluralism in society; capitalism thus deserves our approbation because it protects true religion along with just about every

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

other imaginable cult. The premise behind this argument is unchallengeable, and that, in a way, is the trouble. Capitalism doesn't care what religion you belong to because it relativizes everything: you can sell rosaries or abortions, Bibles or porno movies. Nothing matters except profits. This approach to humans and human behavior may produce some good results (it runs counter to racial discrimination because the only color it cares about is green), but on the whole it is a system that must be approached warily by anyone who is serious about religion. Capitalism is not just color-blind, it is morally blind.

This is not to say that believing Christians and Jews cannot be advocates of capitalism. But it does seem to me that we must be very careful to couch our argument in terms that are narrowly pragmatic and empirical. We can argue that capitalism does a much better job of generating wealth and maximizing economic choice than does socialism. We can think of capitalism as a useful machine or tool for realizing certain goals, but, like all machines, it is mindless and soulless. It needs to be regulated by people with humane values and standards who use them to make the moral judgments that capitalism refuses to make. This does not always have to mean legal regulation or coercion, but at the very minimum, it requires some kind of public voice that identifies what is real and what is bogus, what is wholesome and what is poisonous, what is beautiful and what is ugly. More than ever, capitalism requires a "bully pulpit" to help guide people's choices. Berger has left out all that and has instead doctrinalized the internal (or infernal) logic of capitalism itself.

Berger boasts that capitalism "*leaves room*" for every sort of religious institution. "Included in this free, or relatively free, social space are *traditional institutions*." Well, gosh, thanks. I am amazed that Berger, who I assume shares your journal's commitment to bringing traditional religion into the "public square," seems ready to bring it in as one of innumerable cults competing for public attention. This would not be a public square but an arcade in which the historic religions of the West man their booths alongside Moonies, peyote-eaters, sauerkrautists, and so on—equal space for all.

This is indeed what *has* been happening in capitalist America since the 1960s, but I can't see any reason to celebrate it. Legally, America is and should be a pluralist country, but it seems to me that the time has come for traditional Christians and Jews to speak out more forcefully about the particular tenets of their creeds. Instead, Berger seems to love diversity for its own sake. I keep hearing this from college deans and presidents. I'm sorry to read it in a journal devoted to FIRST THINGS.

George McKenna
Professor of Political Science
City College of
City University of New York

False Tolerance

Debate over the Supreme Court's peyote decision illustrates something we seem to have forgotten. While intolerance is obviously the opposite of genuine religious freedom, tolerance is freedom's counterfeit, providing the appearance while denying the substance.

Comte de Mirabeau expressed this when he told the French National Assembly: "I am not going to preach toleration. The most unlimited freedom of religion is in my eyes a right so sacred that the word toleration, intended to express it, seems to me to convey a suggestion of tyranny. In fact, the existence of *any* authority which has the power to tolerate is an encroachment upon the liberty of thought precisely because it tolerates and therefore has the power not to tolerate."

The debate between Justices Scalia and Brennan is, at its heart, a debate over who holds that "power not to tolerate." For Brennan, the power is held by a social elite controlling a liberal Supreme Court. For Scalia, it's held by a majority represented by often inept state legislatures. Both grant "religious freedom" rather than recognize it as an inalienable right.

Neither believes in genuine freedom because both are restrained by prevailing secular orthodoxies that deny what Guido De Ruggiero termed the "ultimate foundation" of liberty—the "consciousness" of "one's own infinite spiritual value" followed by a "recognition" of that value in others.

It is this recognition of others that prevents religious freedom from becoming license. That's why the infant sacrifices of fertility religions (in both their ancient and modern varieties) are not protected. The use of peyote in religious services, however, is protected as was the sacramental use of wine during Prohibition.

Mike W. Perry
Seattle, WA

On Franky Schaeffer

This letter is a clarification of Kenneth A. Myers' critique of Franky Schaeffer and review of Schaeffer's book *Sham Pearls for Real Swine* in the January 1991 issue. . . .

It is indeed true, as Mr. Myers notes, that Francis Schaeffer has influenced many who today are actively involved in the innumerable issues facing modern humankind. This was true in my case since I had the privilege of working closely with Dr. Schaeffer and Franky during those years when "Schaeffer and Son" were literally creating the Christian activist movement (as it has been called). It is here that Franky Schaeffer is not given his proper due in Mr. Myers' review.

Dr. Schaeffer, the pensive and thoughtful philosopher, was in most respects ignited to poignant views on the issues by his son Franky. In fact, *How Should We Then Live?*, the 1976 book (and film series) that brought Dr. Schaeffer to the forefront of the evangelical community, was dedicated to Franky. Dr. Schaeffer wrote:

> To my son, Franky Schaeffer, who had the original vision for this project, both the book and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the film, and who had much to do with every aspect of the hard work and heavy practical realities of carrying it to completion.

In many respects, the same was true of Dr. Schaeffer's *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* and *A Christian Manifesto*. I [know] from first-hand experience. Indeed, I was the researcher for Dr. Schaeffer on *A Christian Manifesto*, which was a brainchild of Franky Schaeffer. This places Franky in the distinctive position of being a cofounder of the Christian activist movement. . . .

The crucial point here is that one cannot, as Mr. Myers attempts to do, criticize the son without criticizing the father. Francis and Franky Schaeffer worked in tandem.

There seems to be, then, an implication in Mr. Myers' review that Franky Schaeffer, as he engaged the evangelical community in debate, may have simply ridden the coattails of his father. However, to imply such would be inaccurate. The facts suggest otherwise.

John W. Whitehead
The Rutherford Institute
Charlottesville, VA

I read with dismay Kenneth Myers' personal attack on Franky Schaeffer in the form of a "review" of his new book *Sham Pearls for Real Swine*.

Five years ago, I had the pleasure of being the Executive Producer of Franky Schaeffer's feature film *Wired to Kill*. Since that time, I have watched Mr. Schaeffer's career with both interest and respect. To my knowledge, he is the only young conservative and believing Christian to have recently gone so far in a Hollywood film-directing career.

Mr. Myers has evidently mistaken Schaeffer's self-effacement in his book as evidence of [a sense of] failure, even "rejection." But if Mr. Myers really understood the film business or at least read *Variety*, he would know that in the last four years Schaeffer has directed three feature films and is currently directing his fourth. Clearly, this is success that merits some kind of recognition.

At the same time, Franky Schaeffer continues to speak and write on the issues of our day and remains a staunch prolife advocate who speaks out for this position across the United States and Europe.

Mr. Myers' review is a low blow to a man and a book that deserve better. You owe your readers a genuine review of this excellent book by someone who doesn't have a personal ax to grind.

Myers faults Schaeffer for repudiating "new class evangelicals who are . . . too soft on abortion . . . too chummy with various leftish ideologies. . . ." With my acquaintance with First Things, I would have thought you would defend a contemporary Hollywood director who held such views, not provide a platform for someone to take a cheap shot at him.

Paul McGuire
Santa Clarita, CA

Flag Issue Not Religious

A proposed constitutional amendment to reverse the recent holdings of the Supreme Court with respect to the practice of flag burning may or may not be wise, but many of the fears expressed in the opinion by William Johnson Everett ("The Flag Amendment *Is* a Religious Issue," December 1990) are unfounded.

The current practice of conducting the flag salute in the public schools does not constitute the establishment of religion. Indeed, in 1943, in *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette*, the case in which it was held that under the First Amendment no one could be *required* to salute the flag, the Supreme Court contemplated with equanimity the continuation of the practice on a voluntary basis, even though the Jehovah's Witnesses considered the flag salute idolatrous.

On the other hand, the Supreme Court has consistently disapproved on establishment grounds the practice of teacher-led prayer in public schools, whether the prayer be the composition of the state or a religious group, and even though participation is voluntary. The difference in result lies in the fact that the Court will permit in Caesar's schools the rendering of the things that are Caesar's, but not the things that are God's.

Returning to the question of a proposed constitutional amendment to undo the holdings in the flag-burning cases: The probable object of the proposal would be the authorization, although not the requirement, of a statute prohibiting the defilement—or, if it be preferred, the desecration—of the American flag. Of course, such a statute would be coercive. It is in the nature of law to be coercive.

But, unlike *Barnette*, the coercion would not operate to *require* an act or speech, but to *stop* an act. (In the absence of a specific proposal, I assume the authorization would extend only to conduct considered as speech rather than pure speech.) Such a statute would, of course, limit speech, but that would be the purpose of the proposed amendment.

How the statute by creating a kind of public area of respect for the flag would also establish religion is difficult to understand. Although under *Barnette* the inculcation in schoolchildren of respect for the flag through the exercise of the salute is not a religious act, the Everett argument seems to say that the prohibition of a particular kind of disrespect for the flag, its defilement, is. This seems close to a declaration that the essence of religion lies in one's ability to say no, rather than yes.

Or is Mr. Everett perhaps suggesting that the Supreme Court should now go beyond *Barnette* and hold that flag saluting in public schools even on a voluntary basis constitutes the establishment of religion?

Joseph M. Lynch
Professor of Law
Seton Hall School of Law
Newark, NJ

William Johnson Everett replies:

Professor Lynch's legal observations are correct so far as I can see, and I alluded to some of his concerns in my piece. However, the thrust of my piece was to observe that any amend-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ment furthering the sense of the sanctity of the flag and the right of government to impose laws concerning it begins the long cultural process of creating a national religion. It is this long-term effect that I wished to herald, because I think it is inimical both to the free discourse of a republic and the claims of a transcendent God.

Don't Promote Gay Bashing

It is unfortunate that your piece "Notes on the Culture Wars" (Public Square, January) turns an important commentary on the lack of moral values instruction into a diatribe against homosexuals. Whatever one's views might be on homosexual *activity*, the *homosexual* is a creature of God entitled to the same love and understanding we should accord all God's creatures.

Richard John Neuhaus extends [criticism of] the "circus" actions of some gay rights activists to a condemnation of all homosexuals. He points to the wealth of some homosexuals as a sign of societal nondiscrimination, yet fails to note the ease with which so many violently attack homosexuals and use their "God-fearing hatred" of homosexuals as justification for such violence.

Condemning the views of a segment of a cultural class and attributing those views to the entire class only encourages treatment of all individuals in the class as less than human. Thus such diatribes give encouragement to assaults on those who are or appear to be homosexual and to denial of medical care, insurance, jobs, and housing to those with a suspected homosexual orientation.

Clearly, basic values of what is right and wrong must be included in our school curricula. The lack [of inclusion] is not the blame of "homosexual activists" or "liberals" . . . or anyone else. It is the failure of all of us to take part in the political system to assure that at the least the basic values recognized by all are taught to our children, since those values for a variety of reasons are not being communicated through church or family.

If those values are left untaught, our children will continue to rampage through public parks raping women, to terrorize motorists from overpasses, and to fall into substance abuse and crime without a single thought that what they are doing is wrong. Let's stick to the topic and not keep searching for scapegoats.

Peter K. Ilchuk
Key West, FL

Bonhoeffer on Western Unity

The interesting discussion between Richard John Neuhaus and Wolfhart Pannenberg ("The Christian West?" November 1990), especially concerning Christian unity, includes ideas that are very close to those expressed by Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his *Ethics:*

> Our own Christian past . . . [is] a common western heritage. Jesus Christ has made of the west a historical unity. . . . Even the wars of the west have had the unity of the west as their purpose. . . . It is only when Christian faith is lost that . . . there comes total war, war of destruction. . . . Pope and emperor strove for the formation of [western] unity. . . . It was the Reformation that broke asunder the unity of the faith. . . . The Thirty Years War finally laid bare the political disunity of the west which had resulted from the schism of faith. . . . The guilt and the distress which this . . . entails are shared in common by the whole of western Christendom. . . .
>
> On the Protestant side Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms was misinterpreted as implying the emancipation and sanctification of the world and of the natural. . . . On the Catholic side the process of secularization rapidly became anti-clerical in a revolutionary sense, and indeed anti-Christian. That is why the first revolutionary upheaval took place in Catholic France . . . [introducing the] cult of reason, the deification of nature, faith in progress. . . . The French Revolution was the laying bare of the emancipated man in his tremendous power and his most terrible perversity. . . .
>
> The French Revolution [is] the moment of birth of modern nationalism. . . . Nationalism evokes the countermovement of internationalism. The two are equally revolutionary. . . . At the end of the path which was first trodden in the French Revolution there is nihilism.

As this indicates, Bonhoeffer sees revolutionary nationalism (of which National Socialism is the most extreme and destructive example) as an integral part of the legacy of modernity that was put forward in the French Revolution. Thus, what Pannenberg describes as a "revolt against modernity" and "a romantic reaction to modernity" is also, according to Bonhoeffer, an integral *part* of modernity, every bit as modern and revolutionary as the "international" variant.

Charles E. Ford
St. Louis, MO

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FIRST THINGS
APRIL 1991

How Democracy Came About and How It Might Be Sustained

From time to time, a most unlikely book strikes the public imagination and becomes something of a best seller. A case in point is Donald Kagan's *Pericles of Athens and the Birth of Democracy* (Free Press). The book's reception was undoubtedly aided by the triumph of democratic ideas so dramatically evident in the collapse of anti-democratic ideologies in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. Kagan, professor of history and classics at Yale, wrote his book with that historical context very much in mind. Throughout, he makes reference to contemporary developments, and he concludes with specific application to the new situation in Eastern Europe. "The world has been astounded to see thin shoots of democracy trying to break through the hard surface of oppression. Those who wish to help them grow and flourish could do worse than to turn for inspiration and instruction to the story of Pericles of Athens and his city, where once, against all odds, democracy triumphed."

The first thing to be said about *Pericles of Athens* is that it is a fine read. The second thing is that the author's political instincts are admirably sound. He repeatedly emphasizes that the democracy of Pericles was based upon equality (albeit relative equality) in law and politics, not in economics. Athenian democracy, as he tells it, did not result in a "mobocracy" that demanded redistributive justice and an egalitarian leveling of condition. Its notion of justice emphasized—and here Kagan employs very contemporary terminology—equality of opportunity rather than equality of result. These and other features of the fifth-century B.C. democracy that Kagan depicts are attractive enough. That said, *Pericles of Athens and the Birth of Democracy* is of very limited usefulness in understanding either the birth of democracy or the democratic prospect in our time.

Kagan asks us to be impressed with the fact that Athenian democracy endured for 140 years, with intermittent interruptions. Yes and no. Surely the Athenian regime was preferable to some others of its time, notably that of Sparta. But it was not, in any sense recognizable by moderns, a government. The administration of Pericles, admirable orator and politician though he may have been, had very little to do except wage war. And then, in times of war, democratic procedures were largely suspended. The relatively small *polis* of Athens, with its gatherings of six or ten thousand citizens engaged in "intense democratic participation" to deliberate the few items of public business, has almost no resemblance to the tasks of modern states. The direct democracy that Kagan lauds is in significant ways similar to the "participatory democracy" espoused by student radicalisms in the 1960s.

There are yet more serious reasons why *Pericles of Athens* is of little use in thinking about the birth and prospects of modern democracy. Not to put too fine a point on it, Donald Kagan's story is, for the most part, made up by Donald Kagan. He readily admits this. Aside from Thucydides, we have very little first-hand evidence about Pericles or the Athens of his time. Kagan draws on Plutarch, who had access to texts that have been lost, but Plutarch wrote four centuries after the events under discussion. From such fragments Kagan has written a professedly "heroic" and extremely idealized story of Pericles and his career. It makes for good reading, but it does not make for good history. Do not misunderstand. We are not criticizing Mr. Kagan for writing a very imaginative reconstruction of fifth century Greece. If one is an expert in that period, and Kagan surely is, there is an understandable inclination to suggest that one's expertise is relevant to solving even the problems of a very different world 2,500 years later.

The fact is, however, that Athenian democracy of the fifth century B.C. has almost nothing to do with the actual history of the development of democratic governance. Indeed, in our Western story, the democracy associated with Pericles was for centuries taken

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to be a strong argument *against* the democratic idea. Plato and Aristotle (who were much closer to it than Plutarch) thought the Athenian experiment was "madness," and their judgment prevailed, as Kagan readily admits, until historical revisionists in the mid-nineteenth century began to take a more favorable view of Pericles and his time.

What one has in this book, then, is a reconstruction that, in historical reliability, is perhaps a notch above the conventional television "docudrama," passing itself off as a guide to "the birth of democracy" and how to advance the democratic idea in our time. Its literary merits and its author's good intentions notwithstanding, *Pericles of Athens and the Birth of Democracy* has the potential of doing serious harm to the extent that its title is taken at face value. Those who want the democratic idea to grow and flourish "could do worse" than to turn to Donald Kagan's engaging story of Pericles of Athens. They could also do a great deal better. They could, for instance, turn to the actual history of the development of democratic ideas and practices.

The questions raised here have everything to do with religion and public life. Kagan's Pericles is a wondrously secular soul. Under the influence of Anaxagoras, his philosophical mentor, he acquired a measure of skeptical contempt for the religious superstitions of his time, preferring explanations of reality derived from "natural reason." Kagan much admires that characteristic of his hero and, at least by implication, suggests it should be emulated by those who would advance democracy today.

There is nothing new in the observation that we tend to write history in our own image. The secular mindset tends to create heroes who are like-minded, even if they must be fabricated out of whole cloth. The reality so embarrassing to such a mindset is that Pericles and his Athens—whether real or fictionalized—played no part in the actual history of the democratic project. Those who are embarrassed by the role of religion in that history *must* tell a thoroughly secularized story of democracy, even if they have to make it up.

The real history of the birth of what we today mean by democracy has been told by numerous scholars, and never more impressively than by A. D. Lindsay in *The Modern Democratic State*. That birth has everything to do with a Hebrew monotheism that sharply relativized the gods of all human regimes, and with New Testament teaching regarding the dignity and destiny of all human beings, regardless of their nation, race, or status in life. The painful evolution of democracy required the assertion of a moral law superior to positive law, and of the "dual allegiance" of citizens entangled in the conflict between the City of Man and the City of God (Augustine).

The critical moments in the emergence of democratic thought included Pope Gelasius (d. 496) and his doctrine of the duality of authorities, spiritual and temporal. Skipping ahead more than a millennium, democracy was refined in the Reformation, especially in the Puritan notion of a realm of grace distinct from the realm of law, thus requiring limited governance. Here is the font of the notion of conscience and individual rights—all the ideational stuff that preoccupied Hobbes and Locke and the American founders, as well as, with less happy consequences, the French Revolution.

It was not Athenian notions of rare civic virtue but the Christian idea of universal original sin, well appreciated by Madison and others, that impelled the development of the *institutions* of democracy, such as checks and balances and countervailing interests. (It is noteworthy that Kagan's idealized picture of Pericles' Athens does not contain a hint that it produced even one institution applicable to contemporary governance. The democratic idea that has endured and will likely endure in the future depends upon democratic *institutions* premised not upon heroic virtue but on the ordinary condition of man, who is, as the founders said, neither beast nor angel.)

Our purpose is not to recapitulate here, even in briefest form, the actual birth and development of democracy. Nor is it to discourage anyone from enjoying the legend of *Pericles of Athens and the Birth of Democracy*. We intend only to note the oddity of secular intellectuals—and historians at that—who prefer to fabricate a story justifying what they favor rather than face up to the inextricably religious origins and continuing foundations of our democratic regime. It will be no surprise if Kagan's book is adopted for college courses. It is safely sanitized of the influence of religion. We take it that Mr. Kagan is something of a neoconservative and a friend of traditional academic values. He should therefore have second thoughts about contributing, however inadvertently, to the deconstructionist notion that writing history is no more than the production of myths and "creative misinterpretations" in the service of present purposes. To be sure, this would deprive him of the pleasure of saying anything useful about the birth of democracy within the field of his specialty, for the birth of anything pertinent to what today is meant by democracy is not to be found in the fifth century B.C.

There is one group that we hope will not read *Pericles of Athens and the Birth of Democracy*; or at least we hope they will not accept Donald Kagan's invitation to accept it as "inspiration and instruction." The new leaders of Central and Eastern Europe must attend to the real world, including how democracy has in fact been conceived, established, and defended in human history. They all face powerful forces of nationalism and religion, and must try to reconstruct the mediating institutions of a civil society utterly alien to the direct democracy of Kagan's Athens of 2,500 years ago.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If, in Poland, Romania, Estonia, and elsewhere, political leaders attempt to construct democracy *against* the dynamics of religion in particular, the consequence will be almost certain disaster. The future of democracy in Eastern Europe and elsewhere depends in very large part upon enlisting the commitment of religion to a regime that both serves the temporal interests of the *civitas* and respects the citizen's higher allegiance to the Kingdom of God. From that dual allegiance, and not from Donald Kagan's imagined Athens, democracy actually came about, and by that dual allegiance democracy has been sustained and, please God, will be sustained in the future.

Opinion

The Philosophical Crusher

Ben F. Meyer

We milk the cow of the world, and as we do
We whisper in her ear, "You are not true."
—Richard Wilbur

"Before we dismantle this imposing structure, let's step back a moment and admire its elegant lines." Thus Alex Tourigny, my teacher of philosophical psychology forty years ago, was wont to mark the pause before the crusher. His version of the crusher was a deadly "reduction to first principles."

Of the many other kinds, consider two. Crusher number one is the dreaded counterinstance. The lecturer says: "Languages may have a double negative with a negative meaning, a double negative with a positive meaning, and a double affirmative with a positive meaning—but no language has a double affirmative with a negative meaning." And from the back of the hall comes: "Yeah, yeah."

Crusher two is the reduction of implicit to explicit self-contradiction. "Let me see if I get your drift: you deny the correspondence theory of truth, for it fails to correspond to the way we actually think." This reduction takes place by making explicit, not the content of an affirmation, but the performance of affirming (or denying).

A like performance: "We cannot know what is really and truly so." The self-contradiction latent here is swiftly rendered patent by making the act of affirming thematic: "I am stating what is really and truly so when I say that we cannot know what is really and truly so."

Such is the philosophical crusher. There are those who say it doesn't crush, but, if you notice, they are exceedingly careful not to get caught in its pincers. Heidegger called it trivial and Frederick Copleston calls it slick, but no one yet has made the case that it doesn't hold.

What was wrong with Hume's theory of the mind? The late Bernard Lonergan summed it up in three sentences.

> Hume thought the human mind to be a matter of impressions linked together by custom. But Hume's own mind was quite original. Therefore, Hume's own mind was not what Hume considered the human mind to be.

Lonergan was an adept of the philosophical crusher. In a book review that must rank with the all-time unappealable counterstatements, he observed:

> [The author] asserts an unbridgeable difference between the way in which God is in himself and the way in which he is in our knowledge. This, of course, while absolutely possible, is not possibly known within our knowledge, and so the reader may wonder how [the author] got it into his knowledge.

We shall return to Lonergan, for he was not content to apply the crusher only occasionally and unsystematically. He proposed that it be made to operate systematically, and that is our main point in bringing it up at all.

Think of what its potential might be. Every ideologist carries a single burning coal in the tongs of his mind, an explanatory idea meant to unlock the secret of how human beings work. J. P. Stern once remarked that in each case the explanation proceeds by way of what makes men do what they do. None of the three modern masters Stern had in mind—Marx, Freud, Nietzsche—was eager to apply his explanation to his own work. A way of accommodating, if not reducing, psychoanalysis itself to the sexual impulse might just possibly have been wrung from Freud, but Marx knew (as we know) that he did not write *Das Kapital* out of material interest, nor does the will-to-power explain the composition of Nietzsche's numerous monographs on the will-to-power (e.g., *The Anti-Christ*). What a crusher! The actuality of performance belies the all-comprehensive explanation. The gap between the two looks like a common trait of ideologues and their ideologies. Systematic exploitation of the gap would mean an efficient, methodical undermining of ideology.

Sometimes the ideologist seems to be aware of it. Sartre acknowledged that literature owed its power to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

its being somehow like life. He also knew that the chaos he affirmed of life he could not make work in a novel. An authentically Sartrean novel would be a chaotic muddle. But novelists, including Sartre, labor under a first commandment, Thou shalt not be dull. If *La Nausée* or *Les chemins de la liberté* are plotted and the characters convince, how can this fail to be due to the novelist's bad faith? If the novel works, the philosophy doesn't—and vice versa.

Literary theory has found itself in a like dilemma. Bernard Bergonzi's new book *Exploding English* points out that the followers of Nietzsche and Foucault are passionately persuaded that truth is a mere rhetorical device employed in the service of oppression, and say so at length. What, then, is the status of their saying so? We should give them their choice. Is it false? Or in the service of oppression?

In this bleak spectacle of theories shattering on the rock of fact, the fact in question is special. It has to do with how the human subject functions. What if we were to come into possession of truth on fundamental aspects of human functioning? Would we not find ourselves in possession of a powerful instrument for discriminating, methodically and productively, among a vast range of significant truths and errors?

Just such an instrument was an eighteenth-century dream. Though Collingwood called it a relic of substantialism, the dream might just as well be transposed into the non-substantialist terms of "invariant pattern." This, indeed, is how Lonergan conceived it: the invariant pattern of human intentionality.

Drawing on a metaphor of levels, the pattern has the following shape. First, there is an empirical level, which is the level of sensing and of the data of sense. (Moreover, since data are prior to understanding, there also belong to this empirical level all conscious human operations and their products *insofar as they present themselves*—to psychology, say, or to cognitional theory—*as data of consciousness.*) Second, there is a level of understanding, to which belong the acts of wondering, of translating wonder into questions, the quest of answers, their selective conceptualization, the working out of the significance of what we have understood. Third, there is the rational level of reflection on the adequacy of any answer, the quest of relevant evidence, and the state of mind (its name is "objectivity") that allows one to pass a true judgment, either merely thinking or actually knowing it to be true. Such is the level of true and false, certain and probable. Fourth, there is the level of choice and decision: deliberating, evaluating, and deciding. Here we are concerned with ourselves, our ends and means, our loves and hates, the courses of action open to us, and their likely results; here, too, we carry out our decisions or fail to do so.

This scheme is radically unrevisable. For, since any revision would have to appeal to data, it would have to allow an empirical level of operations. Since any revision would have to offer a better explanation of the data, it would have to allow an intelligent level of operations. Since any revision would have to claim that its better explanation is more probable, it would have to allow a rational level of operations. Finally, since no one undertakes the task of revision unless he takes it to be worthwhile, the revision must affirm or suppose a responsible level of operations.

The fact is that the human subject exhibits a set of structured spontaneities: attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, and responsibility. What keeps wrecking mistaken theories of human performance—how we know, or what friendship is, or why language works this way or that—is the gap that recurrently comes to light between performance and theory. The theorist spontaneously operates one way and laboriously theorizes in another.

There is a passage in Lonergan where Aristotle is pictured as having been present when (according to Plato's *Meno*) Socrates contrived to demonstrate the seemingly ignorant slave-boy's geometrical knowledge, and from it inferred the boy's contemplation, in an earlier mode of existence, of eternal mathematical forms. This stunning inference captured the wonder of Socrates' listeners—except for Aristotle, who was left pondering Socrates' diagram in the dust. Preexistence, shmee-existence. From a diagram in the dust that kid had *abstracted* an intelligible form! Having problematized with Plato the conditions of knowledge and concluded to the necessity of intelligible forms, Aristotle figured out by inference how in fact we acquire them. *In fact:* there are numerous more or less reasonable arguments accounting for how we come into possession of ideas, but how *in fact* do we do so?

The test of the answer is the field of human performance. Once the pattern of human operations has been brought to light in radically unrevisable fashion, new possibilities heave into view: in particular, the new possibility of systematically confronting theories of knowing with facts of knowing, theories of love or of freedom with the facts of the human subject-in-love, freely disposing of himself. What we blithely call "the facts" are a normative pattern—empirical, to be sure, but not a slice of life. And the image that they yield of the human subject is as far removed as possible from, for example, the systematic use of knowledge to crush or to bludgeon.

"The philosophical crusher" accordingly turns out to be an attention-grabber for a philosophy finally typified by sobriety, self-restraint, even love—just what Nietzsche thought he would free us from. But it was the facts of human performance that gave this philosophy its form. The facts of performance reveal the will-to-power as one more aberration. At its most authentic, human subjectivity is defined by a threefold break with the conventionally modern: the break with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

picture-thinking (all the forms of "language philosophy"), the break with the primacy of gratification (norm of choice in the consumer society), and the break with the great dogma of the secular (the this-worldly as ultimate horizon).

If the philosophical crusher is converted into a methodical dialectic—a technique grounded on the observation that fact is normative—we have found a way of settling what seem otherwise to be irresolvable disagreements, those not resolved by appeal to "rational argument," precisely because they include a disagreement on rationality. They differ, not on particulars within a particular horizon, but on horizon itself—a metaphor for the limits of what I know and care about. My horizons are the product of my life-history. I am aware that they are limited (whole worlds fall outside my horizons, utterly meaningless to me) and, if I have lived long enough, I shall be aware that they are riven with error—but where they are erroneous and why, I do not know. Dialectic is designed to tell me where I am not only limited but wrong, not only wrong but wrongheaded.

Where you and I differ, of course, I tend to think it likely that I am right and you are wrong. Where we differ *dialectically*—I am, let's say, prochoice and you prolife—I am passionately persuaded that I am right and you wrong. Dialectic is designed to settle just those matters on which we differ dialectically and passionately. In inventing the systematic process of dialectic and its follow-up, Lonergan's main purpose was to discover what Christian truths, and especially what doctrines, to affirm. But there is nothing to keep philosophers and educators and social and literary critics and ordinary puzzled citizens from using it to find out how to resolve the radical conflicts that most engage them.

There is just this problem: dialectic is productive in the measure that its practitioners are radically pointed in the right directions. I must have broken with picture-thinking to make truly satisfactory philosophical judgments. I must have made the primacy of values over satisfactions an existential reality of my own in order to make habitually authentic moral judgments. And since we cannot exclude the issue of religion from the interests of philosophers, literary and social critics, educators, and ordinary citizens, I must have made the discovery that God is more worthy of my love than any finite person, group, or program, and must have begun to let that love take root in and transform me.

Three steep conditions! They might be thought to be the bad news, the kind of woeful ascertainment that sent the rich young man away sorrowful. But in a West that has come to mean technology and junk culture, they condition the meeting of the contemporary challenge—the herculean task of rebuilding the human in the West.

Whoever finds the above three conditions beyond him still has a little comfort. If he wishes, he can learn to win an argument or two by practicing the philosophical crusher.

Ben F. Meyer *teaches in the Department of Religious Studies at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario.*

The Vatican and the State of Israel

Eugene J. Fisher

In a recently published book, Sergio I. Minerbi, formerly of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, speaks of the Catholic Church as "the chief opponent" of the Zionist movement past and present, and he identifies "the real reasons underlying" this "hostility" as "immutable theological positions" (*The Vatican and Zionism: Conflict in the Holy Land 1895-1925*, Oxford). Minerbi offers no sustained argument for this viewpoint—indeed, he makes no theological analysis of Catholic doctrine—but simply presumes it as self-evident.

Yet in 1987 the Holy See, at a meeting of the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee, stated categorically that "there exist no theological barriers" to improved relations between itself and the State of Israel, though it conceded that there are serious diplomatic and historical difficulties still to be overcome. Is the Vatican deceiving itself and others on this question? My own studies of relevant Catholic teaching both historically and in the present suggest that while the ancient Christian "teaching of contempt" toward Jews and Judaism may have had an influence early on in the reactions of the Holy See to, for example, Herzl's initial plea for public support of Zionism, such considerations were never really at the heart of official Catholic attitudes. They were in any case soon outweighed by more pragmatic considerations, as the Holy See attempted to influence the course first of the British Mandate and then of the UN partition plan in a way protective of the rights both of access to the holy places and of the Christian minorities of the Middle East.

Indeed, a recent comprehensive analysis of the diplomatic maneuverings and public positions of the Holy See from the end of the nineteenth century to the present, Andrej Kreutz' *Vatican Policy on the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict* (Greenwood Press, 1990) comes to this same conclusion. Although he, like Minerbi, notes a "hostility" to certain elements of Zionist aspirations, Kreutz acknowledges that "the Vatican's lack of official objection to the creation of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a Jewish State in Palestine greatly influenced various Catholic countries in their political support for the partition plan" in 1947. It was precisely the votes of Catholic, especially Latin American, countries that put the UN vote over the top and made possible the creation of a Jewish State in the Land of Israel for the first time in almost two millennia. Thus when the Holy See had its most opportune moment (had it so wished) to oppose Zionism actively, it did not. Rather, it acted discreetly but decisively to facilitate the culmination of the Zionist dream.

Kreutz does note, quite correctly, that the element of the UN's partition plan that seems most strongly to have produced this "friendly" response by the Holy See to the idea of a Jewish State was the proposal, never implemented, to internationalize the city of Jerusalem. Even today, as both Kreutz and Minerbi report, the Holy See does not consider the disposition of the city to be fully resolved, and it deeply desires a say, within the framework of international law, in that negotiated resolution, no matter who holds actual sovereignty over the city.

So there remain difficulties in Vatican-Israeli relations, but ones that can be overcome through creative negotiation insofar as the Holy See is concerned. The bottom line is that the Holy See is and always has been open to such compromises in working out the difficulties. Were its policies based on "immutable" theological doctrines, no compromise would be possible. Catholic doctrine, by its nature, cannot be compromised by the Church whose very essence lies in its mission to proclaim its truths.

There can be no question of "unproclaimed" or hidden doctrines of the Church—such as Minerbi appears to have in mind—lying behind Vatican policy. On issues of doctrine, what you see is what you get. The Holy See has no objections in principle, theological or otherwise, to the existence of a Jewish State in or Jewish sovereignty over the Holy Land. But it does have an enormous stake both in terms of its own self-interest and as a matter of moral principle both in the holy places and, as Kreutz rightly emphasizes, in the Christian communities of the Holy Land as living witness to the events of salvation history that took place there. These motivations alone, to apply Ockham's razor to the question, are more than sufficient to explain the public postures and private initiatives of the Holy See with regard to the Middle East.

Throughout this century, as both Minerbi's and Kreutz' studies make clear, these motivations have remained remarkably consistent, whether the individual Popes, such as Benedict XV or John Paul II, personally favored the aspirations of the Jewish people or, as in the case of Paul VI (at least according to Kreutz), those of the Palestinians. While Minerbi and Kreutz—one an Israeli, the other a Catholic with rather obvious sympathies toward the Palestinians—differ in their interpretive stances, they tell essentially the same story. The Holy See recognizes and acknowledges the full rights of the Jewish people to sovereignty and statehood. At the same time, it urges the recognition of the right of the Palestinian people, many of whom are Christians, to self-determination. Therefore, the disputed territories, Jerusalem not the least among them, need to have their status resolved through negotiations leading to binding international law. The outcome should recognize the religious freedom and rights of all three monotheistic traditions indigenous to the area: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

This, I submit, is an eminently reasonable posture (being, it might be noted, virtually the same as that of the U.S. government). Within it, one can condemn, as the Popes have consistently done, Palestinian terrorism without rejecting the legitimacy of Palestinian peoplehood, even as one can condemn Israeli heavy-handedness in the administration of the territories without rejecting the validity of the Jewish State or its necessity as a place of security for the Jewish people.

One does not need to invent, as Minerbi and others attempt to do, some esoteric Catholic doctrine to explain or understand why the Holy See has done what it has over the years. Such exercises only cloud the real issues. They also, by raising among Jews the false hope that a simple doctrinal adjustment by the Church (rather than real accommodation by Israel to the reality of Palestinian peoplehood) will resolve the issues diplomatically, do a real disservice to the Jewish community both in Israel and here in America.

The good news in all this is that there are no problems in the equation that cannot, in theory, be resolved to the benefit and satisfaction of all parties concerned. The bad news, of course, is that those pragmatic accommodations seem tantalizingly just out of reach.

EUGENE J. FISHER *is Director for Catholic-Jewish Relations of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.*

When Nice People Do Bad Theology

Kenneth E. Hunter

Sure, Walker Percy already said it, but that was as a good-natured joshing, a passing joke. Now it's hit the pages of the *Wall Street Journal*; everybody's in on it. The November 29, 1990 *Journal* reports a national survey conducted by the University of Wis-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

consin's Center of Demography on religious affiliation and attitudes on family issues such as bearing children out of wedlock, extramarital sex for teenagers and adults, infidelity, and divorce. People with no religious affiliation have the most consistently liberal attitudes on these issues; fundamentalists and Mormons have the most contrastingly conservative views. And which religious group is the most like the nonreligious? You guessed it: Being an Episcopalian is like having no religion at all.

In Percy's novel *The Second Coming*, the nonbelieving protagonist Will Barrett wonders why Christians who supposedly have the Good News are always such Bad News to be around, so annoying to the sensibilities of their decent and unbelieving neighbors. This is the case, he muses, whether they are Alabama Baptists or Boston Catholics. He knows only one exception to this rule, namely the Episcopalians, since "you would barely know they were Christians at all." They are genial, well-mannered, good at blending into their surroundings. They are decent and nice people.

Niceness has a bad reputation these days, probably worse than it deserves. It can't shake the Wimp Factor reputation. But other things being equal, it beats abrasiveness. Yet nice as Nice is, there are problems with making theological judgments justified primarily by Niceness, which is what some very prominent leaders in the Episcopal Church are doing.

The Bishop of Los Angeles, Fred Borsch, is a genuinely Nice Person. He is a scholar, having taught the New Testament at more than one seminary, and one of the recurring themes of his episcopacy is the need for teaching historical-critical methods of Bible study right in the parishes of his diocese. Never mind that even most seminary-educated clergy cannot really *perform* such critical studies, but rather merely learn to parrot whichever academic is currently spouting the most shocking challenge to orthodoxy. And never mind that some academics are declaring bluntly that "the historical-critical method is bankrupt." The bishop is an academic. But he is primarily a Nice Person, eschewing miters and ceremonial pomp whenever possible, and insisting that his clergy address him as just plain old "Fred." Jacobin manners are his style.

As a confirmed Nice Person, Just Plain Old Fred thinks the Church should bless "committed, long-term same-sex unions." So he told the press, and the clergy of his diocese, just a few days before the Diocese of Los Angeles convened in Riverside, California at the end of November 1990. This notice seemed to be in response to the public announcement by the Reverend George Regas, rector of the largest Episcopal parish in the diocese, that he was determined to bless such unions with or without the approval of the Church at large. George Regas, too, is a very Nice Person, who will not allow repressive dogmas, or dusty traditions, or literalist readings of the Bible to stand in the way of his heartfelt Niceness, which is where he discerns the Voice of God calling him to extend a priestly blessing to homosexuals currently suffering the pain of being denied that sanction. They want the blessing. The heart of the Nice Person wants to give it. Deep calls to deep, and the request will apparently not be denied.

There was a great furor among clergy and laity of the diocese before the Convention. A proposal for "upholding and celebrating" (not "blessing," mind you, although the distinction is very fine) same-sex unions was defeated, being approved by clergy delegates but failing to get the required approval of the laity. The furor has not subsided. Conservative lay people are talking about shopping around for another denomination, and even some clergy wonder if they are still welcome in the Church of the Nice People. After all, the bishop in his convention address made some very pointed remarks about those who still take the Scriptures with an "elementary school literalism." There was a tone suggesting that Reactionaries whose hearts are not warmed by the Gospel of Inclusiveness for all those Outcasts hitherto alienated by Traditional Patriarchal Literalists better decide to get on the train or be left at the station.

Certainly, there were some of these reactionaries among the Episcopal clergy. During a workshop on human sexuality at the convention, a well-groomed young man wearing one earring put aside his knitting (No, I am *not* making this up) and stood to explain with trembling lips his desire to break through society's stereotypes of the homosexual by receiving the Church's blessing on his commitment to spend the rest of his life with his Special Person. One priest ventured to this young man the question of precisely what such a blessing would really be, since the priest understood a priestly blessing to derive any value it had from the assurance that it was an accurate indicator of God's blessing. Apart from such assurance, he wondered, what possible value could there be in the nice ritual words of a cleric?

Plainly, this was a coldly intellectual objection in the face of such emotional distress. Plainly, the conservative priest, however gently he dealt with the young man, lacked that New Heart which God seems to have put into Nice Persons, the possession of which dispenses them from the tedious and constraining need to validate their actions against the demands of revelation in Scripture and in the precedents of tradition *before* submitting them to the fashionable social scientists who represent the priesthood of Reason in our time. In short, however kindly and well-mannered he might be, that conservative priest was not a Nice Person in the sense that the bishop and George Regas and those who agree with them are Nice Persons. Judging by the votes, many of us among the clergy are not Nice Persons, although we are in the minority.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Thank God the laity are not as Nice as we are.

Among those of us who are Not Nice, there is a troublesome concern over how we are to discern God's will. Not God's will, mind you, strictly as it regards homosexuals, but across the board. For this has always been a somewhat messy business. Taking the measure of the scriptural witness on any given issue is sometimes tricky. Often we are asking questions the Bible may not have intended to address, so there is the danger of taking a text out of its context. If this means falsifying its intended meaning, there is the danger of taking God's name vainly to support our own prejudices. A dose of fear and trembling is a minimal safeguard. And sane humility requires we check our own perceptions against those of the faithful departed who have gone before us. After all, did Jesus not promise never to abandon his Church even in the face of Hell itself? Surely our spiritual ancestors have as valid a confidence of the Spirit's inspiration as we have. But this does not solve all problems; traditions are not monolithic. They are as complex as Scripture. And our ancestors were working in their times, different from our own, and it is as easy to take them out of their context as it is to misuse Scripture. Granting all this, the Not Nice among us must still say on some issues, such as that of blessing homosexual unions, that we can find *no* convincing precedents for it, *no* indications that God has ever even hinted at his approval of such relationships, or that He has had a recent change of heart. We are not sure He reads those fashionable social scientists, or even that he listens to George Regas' sermons urging the blessing of gay unions.

To the Nice Priests, we would have to say (honestly if not Nicely) that any such blessings would be counterfeits. They could be liturgically tasteful (as befits an Episcopalian rite). They could look like, and sound like, and have all the outward signs of the sacramental blessings of the Church. But, for all the outward signs, there will be no reason to trust that they convey any inward and spiritual grace. Like "funny money," they will lack the one thing needful. Counterfeit money, however skillfully crafted, lacks the authorization of the U.S. Treasury. Counterfeit blessings lack the authorization of the Author.

Now, Nice People, be they laity or priests or bishops, felt that this authorization is present in their Nice hearts, in their sense of compassion. Not-So-Nice conservatives like myself can only wonder when this mode of revelation became the norm, and why we were left out of its benefits. It seems clearly to have been a fairly recent revolution, since the Nice Person's personal revelation-via-compassion supersedes not only Scripture, from which it can pick and choose the gold of Niceness amidst the dross of Patriarchal Oppression, but also the traditions. We now stand in judgment on our traditions. Overturning them in favor of the alleged victims of tradition seems to be the contemporary mission of the Nice People. Heterosexuals have oppressed homosexuals, runs the argument; therefore bless the homosexuals, and if the straights don't like it, they can leave. If such pretensions look like *hubris* to the Not Nice traditionalists, well, what can you expect of the unregenerate? If they go out from us (as over a million Episcopalians have deserted the Church in the last two decades), then we can only say wistfully that it was because they were never truly of us.

It is a mistake to think that in the Church of the Nice People there will be no outcasts; there will be outcasts, but they will be a different set than those for whom the Nice People's hearts burn with compassion. It will be those who thought God's goodness had some relation to traditional standards of decency—and that the relationship was not antagonistic. They thought that the proclamation that God was merciful implied that there was some real sin for Him to be merciful about. And they thought that the invitation to join the Kingdom had some requirement to repent. Of course, most of these people, clergy or lay, are not adept at the kind of historical-critical method of reading the Scriptures that Bishop Borsch wants to see taught at the parish level. With such methods, they would be able to discard the troublesome, awesome (and dare we say "judgmental") Holiness of God while retaining the sentimental coziness of "God is love" minus any hint that this substantially differs in meaning from the statement "God is Nice."

Nor will Neanderthal theologians be the only ones excluded. I think of a young parishioner I visited in the hospital, where she is recovering from a hysterectomy. She is a devoted Christian. Having never been married, she has remained chaste over the years. She still hopes for marriage, but she has lost the long-cherished hope of bearing children. Loss is a common experience, but she could bear this one more easily were leaders of her church not making statements that imply that chastity is not the norm. "Every human being has a God-given right to sexual love and intimacy," George Regas revealed in a widely circulated sermon. Regas meant to "affirm" the homosexual's right to unions blessed by the Church.

But what does this say to the women and men who sought to live chastely in obedience to God's will? It says they are fools. It says the young woman's loss cannot be considered part of her cross, borne with some joy for the sake of her Lord. It says that her childlessness is the unfortunate result of her "elementary school literalism." If only she had learned historical-critical methods of Bible scholarship, it might have turned out differently. She might have sought an anonymous liaison, or numerous encounters, exercising her God-given rights to sexual intimacy. She might have emulated the woman priest who was artificially inseminated with the sperm from several friends, and who perhaps afterwards blessed herself in the name

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of Christ. When we all learn to selectively set aside Scripture and tradition in favor of listening to the revelation of our own Nice hearts, things will indeed be different.

When this happens, it will be a New Church. Some things will have to go, of course. As Lenin observed, you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs. Being a New Church, there will be no point in repeating weekly the Nicene Creed, affirming that we believe "in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church" when we believe in no such thing. (The Church instructed *by* the Apostles is hardly the same church that presumes to give correction *to* the Apostles.) Maybe we will have "The Nice Creed" in its place, with affirmations of Inclusiveness and Compassion and opposition to military solutions in the Middle East. Maybe we will simply take the editorial page of the *New York Times,* reciting it liturgically and ending it with an "Amen."

But perhaps the most important change will be the loss of our ability, as a church, to offer a significant alternative to the values and the viewpoints available in the world. When the Not Nice hearts and minds, informed by revelation and tradition and history, have departed, who will uphold a vision that transcends the liberalisms and ideologies of the contemporary world? It seems unlikely that the Church of Nice People will have much to offer but bromides phrased in quaintly religious-sounding language. Maybe the only Episcopalians left will be those who like the idea of living as though they had no religion at all. They will be Nice. Or, in Eliot's phrase, they will be "a decent, godless people."

Kenneth E. Hunter *is a priest at Saint James Episcopal Church in Newport Beach, CA.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Decline and Fall of the Christian College

James Tunstead Burtchaell

Every one shall consider the main End of his life and studies, to know God and Jesus Christ which is Eternal life. John xvii.3.

Laws, Liberties, and Orders of Harvard College, *circa* 1646

As for the Universities, I believe it may be said, Their Light is now become Darkness, Darkness that may be felt. . . . Tutors neglect to pray with and examine the Hearts of the pupils.—Discipline is at too low an Ebb: Bad Books are become fashionable among them.

George Whitefield, 1744

All Scholars Shall Live Religious, Godly and Blameless Lives according to the Rules of Gods Word, diligently Reading the holy Scriptures the Fountain of Light and Truth; and constantly attend upon all the Duties of Religion both in Publick and Secret.

Yale Laws, II,1, 1745

A university cannot be built upon a sect.

Charles W. Eliot, 1876

There are several major themes that command the attention of the historian of American higher education, but among these the oldest and the longest sustained is the drift toward secularism.

Richard Hofstadter, 1952

The history of American higher education is a sad story of loss of faith by religious institutions. The presence in so many parts of the country of secularized, non-religious, at times even antireligious institutions whose foundations were inspired by religious zeal and apostolic motives seems almost like empirical proof of the contention of positivists that faith and intelligence are incompatible.

Charles F. Donovan, S.J., 1963

We have disavowed a view of the relation between the colleges and the churches which would permit viewing them as agencies of the church in preference for a covenant relationship in which each is recognized to have its own function but a common commitment and point of view on crucial issues.

Edgar M. Carlson, 1967

The survival of recognizably Protestant colleges therefore seems to depend on the survival within the larger society of Protestant enclaves whose members believe passionately in a way of life radically different from that of the majority, and who are both willing and able to pay for a brand of higher education that embodies their vision. Such enclaves still exist, but they are few in number.

Christopher Jencks & David Riesman, 1968

I have watched so many small colleges sucked down the drain by specious appeals to "liberal values" and "top drawer scholarship," as though one cannot find excellent teachers who are also Christians. It is no longer possible to believe that the great central values of Christendom will so commend themselves to the wise and just as to survive without special and even to some degree coercive nurture. How do we meet that challenge without some sort of new Inquisition?

William Muehl, 1975

JAMES T. BURTCHAELL, C.S.C., *a member of the Editorial Advisory Board of* FIRST THINGS, *is Professor of Theology at the University of Notre Dame.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Legion are the universities and colleges in the United States founded under the auspices of the churches. Princeton, Calvin, Hanover, Tulsa, and Macalaster were founded as Presbyterian or Reformed. Brown, Baylor, Wake Forest, Spelman, and Vassar were Baptist. Haverford, Swarthmore, Earlham, Whittier, and Guilford were Quaker. Williams, Yale, Smith, Fisk, and Dartmouth were Congregationalist. Valparaiso, Saint Olaf, Luther, Hartwick, and Wittenberg were Lutheran. Duke, Emory, Northwestern, Southern California, and Syracuse were Methodist. Georgetown, Webster, Notre Dame, Manhattanville, and De Paul were Catholic. The University of the South (Sewanee), Hobart, Bard, William and Mary, and Kenyon were Episcopalian. Those were the offspring of churches with numerous foundations: nearly a hundred for the Methodists (surviving from some 900 foundations), more than a hundred for Presbyterians and Reformed, and more than 250 for the Catholics (not including all those which no longer exist). Then there is the scatter of other foundations: Brigham Young, Bob Jones, Loma Linda, Eastern Nazarene, Bethel . . .

The churches sponsored higher education before there were any state-sponsored colleges or universities; indeed, before there were states. For most of the history of the nation those Christian foundations set the patterns and carried most, then much, of the enrollment. And now, out of that galaxy of institutions founded by believers so that faith could house and nurture learning, there are few—very few—that in any effective and outright way are confessional. There has been, from earliest times, a tendency towards alienation. And that tendency has been continually associated with a striving towards academic excellence on the part of the educators, and a diffidence towards venturesome thinking (or at least expression) on the part of churchmen.

One is obliged to ask, however, whether the overall sense of this secularization enacted on behalf of progress may in some profound sense have involved regress as well. I say overall, because at almost every step in the course of this journey there have been concrete and valuable purposes pursued and improvements attained. It is clear that those who were the chief engineers of secularization did not foresee or intend or wish the alienation of their institutions from their mother churches. But the secularization came. It is not complete. The Catholic colleges and universities were somehow the last great cohort to be drawn into the process, though having once put their feet to the path they are finding their way along it at unprecedented speed. Then there are the small and culturally withdrawn colleges with a campus ethos strongly enough at variance with the dogmas and dictates of Modern Scholarship to disdain and resist it thus far; one thinks of Wheaton, Liberty, Oral Roberts, Calvin, Goshen.

Perhaps the trend is inexorable, perhaps there is some radical antagonism between a community of committed faith and a community of committed learning. Great academic leaders have been persuaded that the church is a counterproductive sponsor of ambitious higher education. The group that held this conviction the most explicitly, and who acted on it in the largest sector of independent higher education—that which belonged to the Liberal Protestants—is well represented by William DeWitt Hyde, elected president of Bowdoin College in 1885 at the age of 26:

> In its religious life the college should be as little as possible denominational. The narrowness of sectarianism and the breadth of the college outlook are utterly incompatible. Denominations may lay the eggs of colleges; indeed, most of our colleges owe their inception to such denominational zeal. But as soon as the college develops strength, it passes inevitably beyond mere denominational control. Church schools are often conspicuous successes. Church colleges are usually conspicuous failures. A church university is a contradiction in terms.

Hyde was on all fours with Charles W. Eliot, during whose early presidency he had been a student at Harvard. It was Eliot who severed the last bonds of that university with its church. He had pointed out the antipathy between religious authority and free inquiry in 1869, in his inaugural address:

> The very word "education" is a standing protest against dogmatic teaching. The notion that education consists in the authoritative inculcation of what the teacher deems true may be logical and appropriate in a convent, or a seminary for priests, but it is intolerable in universities and public schools, from primary to professional. The worthy fruit of academic culture is an open mind, trained to careful thinking, instructed in the methods of philosophic investigation, acquainted in a general way with the accumulated thought of past generations, and penetrated with humility. It is thus that the university in our day serves Christ and the church.

Whether or not emancipation from church be the necessary condition or the inevitable result of intellectual excellence, it behooves us to understand the history and the elemental structure of this secularization. If we do, we shall have to study primarily the colleges and universities affiliated originally with the "mainline" Protestant churches, for it is they who led the way. Our undertaking is to discern any features that recur regularly enough to be considered typical in the process of academic secularization. There are numerous theories about secularization in general. They would best be set aside here, so as to examine

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

what may prove to be a process with distinctive lineaments of its own.

The process was usually unacknowledged, especially unacknowledged to themselves by those most responsible for its furtherance. Those who lived through the secularization of any institution would not easily know which events were marking its course. Secularization, like death, is one of those human events best understood in retrospect. I propose to study first an archetypical case: a secularization that occurred swiftly, with little anticipation, then a rush of public events, then a formal severance between the parties, and lastly a slow, even protracted process whereby the spirit and loyalty and identity of the institution is drained of manifest faith. The story we shall tell is that of Vanderbilt University. If we can disengage a pattern from that story, we can then see whether its elements suggest enough comparisons with other secularization stories to allow us to venture a hypothetical model of the process. Lastly, if successful, we might as well ask whether there be any points of wisdom to be drawn from what we discern.

I

Methodists in America were sundered in 1844 by their disagreement over slavery, when its defenders formed themselves into the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Ten years later their quadrennial General Conference created the Educational Institute, a working group of educators and ministers who resolved in 1857 that the church needed a university. Unlike their many colleges, it would offer mostly graduate studies, in medicine, law, and literature. It would be seated in Nashville, where the church's missionary center and publishing house were located. And it would be governed by the bishops. When they reported to the General Conference later that year, however, they were met with an almost hostile indifference. The existing colleges saw a new foundation as a rival, so their representatives persuaded the body to refuse the charter. And the war came.

After the war a campaign was mounted in the Methodist press on behalf of a central theological seminary. Most of the church's ministry was in the hands of coarsely educated rural evangelists. The next General Conference declined this proposal, and said the money would be better spent subsidizing chairs in Bible studies at the church's existing colleges. At this point the two frustrated proposals—for a university and for a seminary, both at an advanced level—were merged and sponsored by an articulate group that included several of the church's eight bishops and some of its most learned scholars. The Tennessee Conference hosted a convention in Memphis in 1872, and delegates from seven conferences attended. It is likely that the coalition formed there failed to notice that their merger was never perfected, for they separately envisioned two very different foundations: "one fully under the control of the bishops and one committed, above all else, to theological education . . . [and] a church-sponsored university but otherwise one without religious tests or even theological schools, one open to the latest science and scholarship."

The convention authorized the establishment of a "Central University" provided that no less than half the required million dollars were in hand, and named the members of its Board of Trust, who were to function under supervision of the bishops of the church. A new charter to that effect was quickly obtained through a Nashville judge in attendance. But only months later the Southern Methodist bishops declined to sponsor any such university or seminary, citing their commitments to existing colleges and universities.

The bishops, however, had other motives behind their reluctance that were perhaps expressed by one of their number, George F. Peirce: "Give me the evangelist and the revivalist rather than the erudite brother who goes into the pulpit to interpret modern science instead of preaching repentance and faith, or going so deep into geology as to show that Adam was not the first man and that the Deluge was a little local affair. . . . It is my opinion that every dollar invested in a theological school will be a danger to Methodism."

In a church whose membership ranked lower than the older Protestant denominations in education and socioeconomic status, a bishop could well speak like that. The church-at-large was no more forthcoming: fund-raisers sent round the conferences took in less than their own expenses. The panic of 1873 appeared to make the entire scheme a fantasy . . . until Bishop Holland N. McTyeire called upon Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt at his home in New York. Vanderbilt had been stung, in his elder years, by public resentment of him as a crude and crooked profiteer, and he was anxious to offset this repugnant image with some philanthropy. The bishop came back to Nashville with $500,000 in his pocket and the promise of more to follow.

The Board of Trust quickly made him their President, as Vanderbilt had prescribed. McTyeire served in this position from 1875 until 1889, and in this time Vanderbilt University, on the strength of further benefactions from its namesake, followed a course of growth that was typical of the time, save that it was one of the best-financed universities in the post-bellum South.

In light of what was to follow, it should be noted that the small size of the young university, combined with the authority of Methodist bishops to control all assignments in the church, led President McTyeire to handle faculty appointments personally. He did not restrict them to Methodists; indeed, among his first ten faculty appointments two went to Presbyterians and two to Episcopalians. He did refuse the appointment of one young scholar said to incline towards evolution (about whom one advisor had written: "He

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is not a Methodist, and is not even a religious man . . .''). Another was terminated for Darwinian opinions, and a third was eased out after manifest problems with drink.

The local newspaper thought well enough of all this: "Parents who have sons to educate prefer the safety of that atmosphere to genteel infidelity. Vanderbilt is safe. No other institution of learning in America, at the end of three years, ever stood so safe or so strong." But among intellectuals it seemed otherwise: A writer in the *Nation* declared that "Vanderbilt University, which ere this should have been a Cornell or an Ann Arbor, is now not much more than a theological seminary, where the free discussion of scientific truth will not be tolerated." Commenting on one purge of a group of faculty who had objected openly to a salary cutback, Vanderbilt's very sympathetic chronicler, Edwin Mims, construes McTyeire's later career as a season of retrenchment:

> Seemingly there was a growing tendency towards a less liberal policy, towards even ecclesiasticism and denominationalism that had not been apparent in the early years. As Senior Bishop he felt an increasing sense of responsibility to the Church. It was a striking fact that men who went away had been either Episcopalians or Presbyterians, and that their places were supplied in every case, until 1886, by Methodists—three of them sons of Methodist preachers. There developed a feeling in the larger public that Vanderbilt was primarily a Methodist institution.

That this was not the feeling pervading the faculty is shown by a public statement of physicist Landon Garland, the chancellor under McTyeire:

> I would not have you lay aside any denominational preference you may have brought with you here. We would have you cherish the religion of your fathers. This institution is indeed under the special patronage of the Southern Methodist Church, but in its ongoings it knows no denominational distinctions. The youth of all religious denominations have equal rights here. We require no religious tests.
>
> Bigotry can never find a lodgment in the truly Christian heart. A narrow and contracted piety in the conduct of this University would dishonor the name of Wesley and disregard the wishes of the founder. We stand for a broad and thorough education—fully abreast with the advancement of literature and science.

After an interregnum, McTyeire was succeeded in 1893 by a layman, James Kirkland, who would serve with the title of chancellor for forty-four years. Vanderbilt's historian Paul Conkin depicts his ecclesiastical sense:

> Kirkland came to Vanderbilt a loyal Methodist. He joined actively in West End Church and for many years taught a Sunday school class, mostly to his own Vanderbilt boys. His opening lectures to students each fall were as much lay sermons as those of [former chancellor] Garland and not a whit less moralistic. Yet, his allegiance to Methodism never seemed so much doctrinal as a matter of family tradition and soothing familiarity. From his inauguration as chancellor on he always talked of Vanderbilt's "broad" or "liberal" religious identity. In effect, Kirkland reinterpreted Vanderbilt's church ties as a loose commitment to Protestant Christianity, and not at all to the distinguishing doctrines of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. He defended only a loose Christian test in the recruitment of faculty. Obviously, Kirkland had no reason to speak out on doctrinal controversies in the church, but his Sunday school classes and his private correspondence indicate his rather loose, conventional Protestant orthodoxy, and his openness to higher criticism and to Christianized versions of Darwinian evolution. Kirkland reflected the most tolerant and accommodating wing of southern Methodism without ever moving to an avowed "modernist" position. . . .
>
> He always tended to translate "Methodist" into "Christian," and thus so broaden the religious ties of Vanderbilt as to include almost anyone in the South. He would not be sectarian or dogmatic, which is to say he would not be rigorous and thus exclusive on matters of religious belief.

Kirkland's tenure marked a resolute climb of the university towards academic excellence. In 1901, however, one of the bishops, Warren Candler, stunned Kirkland by introducing a motion in the Board of Trust that, all things being equal, Methodists should be preferred for faculty appointments. The motion was accepted unanimously, and Kirkland let the occasion pass without turning it into a confrontation. Three years later, however, when he presented the name of a Baptist faculty member to be dean, Bishop Candler observed that now eleven of the nineteen faculty in that department were non-Methodists, as were all deans in the university but one. A motion to postpone the appointment failed by only one vote. Kirkland told the Board shortly thereafter that he intended to resign. He stated his position in a long paper which Conkin summarizes:

> Vanderbilt was Methodist in many ways, including the faith of board members. He even used the term "ownership" to express the church's claim. "I have felt that Vanderbilt University was Methodist, not in the sense that Methodists made it, but in the sense that it was a great trust

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

committed to the Methodist Church to be carried out, not for selfish ends, but for the good of society and the upbuilding of Christ's kingdom." This could not mean that only Methodists had rights in the university. What about the Vanderbilt family? He had appointed suitable Methodists, which accounted for the higher percentage of Methodists than those of other denominations on the faculty. But to serve the trust given to Vanderbilt he sought those most suited to the task. Who, when ill, would choose a physician because he was a Methodist? Why was the teaching of young men different? Kirkland could not fill the Engineering or Medical faculties with Methodists. No one seemed to mind this. Why did they pick on the Academic [Arts and Sciences Division]? If Kirkland followed the policy suggested by Candler he would soon sabotage the university. Sectarian requirements would drive away all non-Methodists on the faculty and, even more critical, alienate major benefactors, for they endorsed a "liberal Christian policy."

But it was when he spoke directly to this subject of financial support that Kirkland came closest to his fundamental purpose:

> I say to you candidly, as I have said before, I have never found a man, be he Methodist or be he non-Methodist, willing to contribute to our work here who has not endorsed a liberal Christian policy in the administration of affairs. . . . I have never denied our Methodist allegiance, I have never denied our Methodist history, but I have maintained that, greater than Methodism was the cause of Christ and that the call for service in His name was greater than the call to the service of the Church.

The Board capitulated entirely, and gave him a vote of confidence framed in terms as ambiguous as Kirkland's, though perhaps less wittingly so:

> *Resolved, by the Board of Trust of Vanderbilt University, belonging to the Methodist Episcopal Church, South,* That in accepting and administering the great trust of a Christian University our chief concern is to promote the highest type of Christian scholarship and Christian character, and to this end we shall seek in the future, as we have in the past, to secure for its chairs the most competent scholars, of unquestioned loyalty to Christ and of the highest attainment in their several departments.

Only four months later, however, Kirkland was striving to secure a substantial grant from a trust fund, and to its trustees, Conkin indicates, he expressed himself in quite another way:

> Churchmen had conceived Vanderbilt but the Vanderbilt family had provided all the means. The church had contributed no funds except for limited donations to the "theological" department. The government of the university was "vested exclusively in its Trustees. No conference or other ecclesiastical body elects them, nor can any such body give them orders or directions. They elect their own successors and no law exists requiring that they be Methodists." The board made the bishops ex officio members of the board "in order to secure the support and patronage" of the church, and for the same reason submitted the names of other board members "*after election* to the General Education Board of the church for confirmation." In all likelihood, he said, the Vanderbilt board would soon change the role of bishops; some bishops desired a change. He insisted that Vanderbilt used no denominational test in appointing professors, save in the Biblical [Department]. His purpose, he said, was to make Vanderbilt a "genuine university, broad and liberal and free. Outside its Theological Department we do not wish it to be the exponent of any sect or creed, save such as belongs to our common Christianity."

Was this one man with a single policy, giving it appropriate inflections for different audiences? Or was it a man who was devious and equivocal, determined to alter the orientation of the university before anyone be the wiser? Kirkland's financial plans at the time make clear that he had spoken more candidly to the outsiders he was courting than to his own trustees.

A recent fund drive in the church, out of which Vanderbilt had been promised $300,000, had been oversubscribed, yet the allotment to the university amounted to less than one-tenth of that commitment. Kirkland clearly had to look in other directions for support. George Peabody College was a normal school in Nashville that would very likely come into a million dollars with the dissolution of the Peabody Trust, and Kirkland was working energetically to persuade its trustees to move their college across Nashville next to Vanderbilt, thereby making a well-funded school of education available to the university at no cost to itself. Andrew Carnegie was creating a ten-million-dollar foundation to finance pensions for retired faculty, but only for those at nonsectarian colleges. And the General Education Board, funded by John D. Rockefeller, Sr., was becoming a most promising source of funds for promising universities. Kirkland was situating Vanderbilt for appeals to all three of these funding sources, and its ties to the Methodist Church were now a handicap; in the case of the Carnegie Foundation they were outright disqualifying.

Thus Kirkland had a plan quietly underway to change the charter of the school, removing from the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bishops their right to ultimate control. In anticipation of that, in 1905 he had his Board change the bylaws to restrict the number of bishops in their body. Since their founding, the church had increased its bench of bishops from eight to thirteen and was likely to add still more; Kirkland secured an arrangement that henceforth only five of them would sit on the Vanderbilt Board of Trust: and not by right, but by the choice of the Board. In addition, he was quietly working to acquire adequate financing for the Biblical Department to allow it to be separately though subordinately incorporated, with its own board. By segregating all that was unambiguously church-related from "Vanderbilt proper," he could hope to emerge with a university freed from denominational involvement and restraint. The dean, who thought of this as an upgrading of his department rather than as a quarantine of religion, became Kirkland's enthusiastic ally in the endeavor.

This ignited a man who was destined to become the university's bitter antagonist, Bishop Elijah E. Hoss, a former faculty member and editor of the Nashville *Christian Advocate*, the leading Southern Methodist journal that McTyeire had once directed. Hoss had three chief grievances, besides his own disenfranchisement as a bishop from the Vanderbilt Board. First, student behavior had become boorish and immoral (he had in mind intoxication and sex) due to lax discipline by the administration. Second, the theological teaching at Vanderbilt was becoming deviant, if not heretical. Third, the "whole inner drift and spirit of the University has been away from Methodism, and nothing short of a revolution can restore the original and true status."

Kirkland surely had the support of faculty, students, and alumni, but Hoss spoke to the convictions of many fellow bishops and of many in the church at large. He was strident and made few friends, but he raised the cry in a way that Vanderbilt could not stifle. Conkin observes:

> He minded not that [Vanderbilt] remained poor if it remained holy. He rejected Kirkland's vision of a liberal university that joined the world in order to get worldly support [he spoke of Carnegie as a "thug"], that enlisted in behalf of all types of progress. He was not as narrow as he sounded. He wanted to keep the university close to the church, but this did not mean he wanted every professor to be a Methodist or that he advocated piety as the key qualification for a teacher. His real quarrel was with his fellow Methodists who compromised the older beliefs and practices or, worse, expressed contempt for them.

Hoss was joined in his grievances by others in the church, and storm darkened the sky over Vanderbilt. The General Conference of 1906 appointed a commission of five Methodist civil judges to advise on the legal relationship between the church and the university. The judges found for the church. The Vanderbilt Board received their report and ignored it. But as the bishops began to assert their supervisory powers through several vetoes, the Vanderbilt Board, after various attempts to sidestep them, eventually rejected their authority. The College of Bishops went to court, and at the trial level they were thoroughly vindicated. In 1914 the Tennessee Supreme Court reversed, however, resting its judgment heavily on the fact that the church had never validated its patronage by any significant financial subsidy (university lawyers pointed out that the church had expended more on the lawsuit than it had contributed to the university before the controversy had arisen) and that during the first three decades of Vanderbilt's existence they had never asserted their supervisory powers.

A few months later an angry General Conference shook the Vanderbilt dust from its sandals and walked away from even the limited participation in governance that the court had offered. The Board's response was meticulously generic: "Dedicated in the beginning of its history to the union of education and religion, it proposes in the future, as it has done in the past, to make the upbuilding of character its chief task. Not learning alone, but learning transferred into life and dedicated to the highest service of God and man is to remain our ideal and standard."

By this time Methodist students were a minority in all but the two weakest departments, Biblical and Academic. The faculty was 60 percent Methodist. The YMCA was brought in as the nondenominational campus ministry. What had already begun under Kirkland has continued: the students' commitments have been more closely shaped by their being Southern and relatively affluent than by any imperatives offered by the church. The Biblical Department became a School of Religion. As Conkin says, "In their terms, they would now emphasize ethics over theology and reflect a 'serious scientific spirit.' They would emphasize convergent paths to religious truth and grant equality to students of all denominations." Kirkland lived to garner nearly forty million dollars from Vanderbilt, Carnegie, and Rockefeller sources. On the occasion of his fortieth anniversary in the chancellorship in 1933 he would be hailed by the presidents of all the colleges of the Southern Methodist Church as the unquestioned leader of education in the South. His successor was a Presbyterian.

II

To situate the Vanderbilt transformation and ascertain to what degree it might be taken as typical, one must appreciate that there have been several distinct waves of secularization in higher education. The first occurred in the eighteenth century

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in continental Europe: the universities were secularized formally by being nationalized politically, after which they were secularized intellectually by the Enlightenment. That first wave of secularization had no discernible effect on either the British universities or the few young colleges in America, however.

The next wave of secularization, the second in the West and the first in the New World, the transition to which Vanderbilt belongs, affected liberal Protestant institutions—first the new universities, then the colleges—in the four decades after the Civil War, roughly 1870-1910. What David Bebbington says of British universities in this period applies equally to the American situation: the secularization process "consisted of gradual modifications called for by professing Christians rather than any sharp discontinuity achieved by militant secularists."

A third wave of secularization then followed, affecting both state universities and colleges and those which during the first wave had deactivated their church allegiance. This change, which replicated what the Enlightenment had done to most continental universities in the eighteenth century, discredited religious belief and practice as alien to valid scholarship, and insisted that religious belief be allowed no status in higher education except as private and extracurricular. To the men who had led their universities and colleges into a churchless Christianity during the prior period this would, of course, have been viewed as a catastrophe, but it was they who had stripped their institutions of defenses which might have immunized them against this *Kulturkampf* of the secularists.

A fourth wave of secularization has been underway since World War II, affecting mostly the Catholic universities and colleges, and it seems to be following a dynamic very similar to the second, post-bellum, wave. Those institutions which appear not yet to have been drawn into the undertow are the traditional black colleges, the Bible colleges, and the "enclaves" to which Jencks and Riesman referred in our epigram.

The first and third waves, which were the work of nonbelievers with overt ideological hostility to Christian belief, are matter for another study. What we are after here is the handiwork of professed believers who intended their actions to enhance rather than annul the Christian culture of their institutions: a process possibly common to the estrangement of the academy from the liberal Protestant churches following the Civil War and from the Catholic Church following World War II.

III

Let us now discern the basic elements of the Vanderbilt experience and suggestive parallels to be found in the wider Protestant experience.

First, there had been a period of stagnation in higher education, which came to be blamed upon a depressive influence by the churches. Then followed a period of great intellectual turbulence, when fresh findings and methods and disciplines raised fearful philosophical challenges to theology. Spokesmen for the church's concerns, by a compound of incapacity and animosity, exacerbated the apparent hostility between the church and rigorous scholarship.

At Vanderbilt, the Methodists had very few highly trained intellectuals who could help the faithful perceive that authentic scholarship might be an appropriate though astringent medication for their religion.

Also Bishop Hoss, who was one of the few to intuit the destination for which Chancellor Kirkland was bound, happened to be a strident, impassioned, and unattractive antagonist, who defined the issues in so anti-intellectual a way that he strengthened Kirkland's credibility among those who sought an institution of rigorous learning. As often happens, the church was served by officers to whom advanced learning was an unknown. Hoss was the very incarnation of that to which an ambitious company of scholars would not wish to be accountable.

Just after the Civil War, bright young American *literati* exposed to the new surge of scholarship at continental universities came home only to be dismayed by the lethargy and intellectual squalor of their no-longer *almae matres*. The mediocrity they now noticed had afflicted American campuses since the turn of the century: seven decades of torpor. The ancient, endowed colleges seemed hardly more serious or alert than the scores of younger ante-bellum foundations.

When the innovative publications of Darwin, Marx, Comte, Renan, James, and others raised theories that few American professors could cope with, the instinctive response of college faculty and administrators was either to shun them or to denounce them. In doing so they failed to notice that it was not the findings of Darwin, Marx & Co. that threatened to bring the intellectual integrity of the Christian establishment tumbling down. It was the philosophical conclusions the innovators had so swiftly assembled, not their empirical findings or their first constructs, that put the Christians' feet to the fire. And since the liberal Protestant establishment had been left philosophically impoverished by their ancestors, their response was simple disdain for the entire challenge: facts, findings, and philosophy. In the eyes of the hotshot cadet generation, the impotent professoriate and the authoritarian presidents and trustees only made manifest that it must have been the church's domination that had deadened their colleges.

There was a general impatience expressed by forward-looking educators about the ineptitude of the collegiate system. Francis Wayland had given it voice in his *Report to the Corporation of Brown University*, which anticipated in 1850 most of what would happen

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in 1870-1910.

> We have now in the United States . . . one hundred and twenty colleges. . . . All of them teach Greek and Latin, but where are our classical students? All teach mathematics. but where are our mathematicians? [He quotes George Ticknor:] "Who, in this country, by the means offered him, has been enabled to make himself a good Greek scholar? Who has been taught thoroughly to read, write, and speak Latin? Nay, who has been taught any thing at our colleges with the thoroughness which will enable him to go safely and directly to distinction . . . ?"

Wayland and the other reformers saw the church as a principal source of the conservative resistance they met in their efforts to open higher education to intellectually capable students. It was not so much that the churchmen were convinced the classical curriculum was the best; they were no longer capable of even discussing the issue in the breadth that it deserved. While claiming to follow a traditionally learned vocation, they had in fact ceased to be truly learned men.

Andrew White, who would become the founding president of Cornell University, one of the first institutions explicitly nonsectarian from its foundation, had been soured by his one year at a small Episcopal college. Dissipation among the students and history forcibly put to the church's service were the memories he carried away with him on his way to find serious love of learning at Yale and Michigan. His Cornell inaugural in 1869 declared: "I deny that any university fully worthy of that great name can ever be founded upon the platform of any one sect or combination of sects. . . . We will labor to make this a Christian institution; a sectarian institution may it never be." He recounted a string of horror stories of sincere scholars being thwarted on church-run campuses. "Any institution under denominational control inevitably tends to make allegiance to its own form of belief a leading qualification. It may become a tolerably good denominational college, like the hundreds already keeping down the standards of American education, but it can become nothing more."

As president of a university that drew to itself all of New York's land-grant income besides a founder's ample endowment, White's dislike for the church colleges, intensified by their resentment of Cornell's wealth, drew him to appreciate the animosity Henry Tappan had experienced at Michigan:

> The worst difficulty by far which [Tappan] had to meet was the steady opposition of the small sectarian colleges scattered throughout the State. Each, in its own petty interest, dreaded the growth of any institution better than itself; each stirred the members of the legislature from its locality to oppose all aid to the State university; each, in its religious assemblages, its synods, conferences, and the like, sought to stir prejudice against the State institution as "godless."

Daniel Coit Gilman, founding president of The Johns Hopkins University, the other new nonsectarian institution of higher learning, grieved over a government report that as of 1876 there were 545 degree-granting institutions in the country. "Most of these colleges are inadequately endowed, and consequently the instruction which many of them offer is of a very secondary character. A very large part of them represent some sectarian or denominational opinion; some of them have little more than a name, a charter, and a bias." Years later he could "see all over the land feeble, ill-endowed, and poorly manned institutions, caring a little for sound learning but a great deal more for the defense of denominational tenets."

Charles W. Eliot, who with White and Gilman comprised the triad of influential educators who led the secularization movement in the late nineteenth century, has already been heard from. At the Johns Hopkins inaugural he joined in the critique, though somewhat more defensively: "A university whose officers and students are divided among many sects need no more be irreverent and irreligious than the community which in respect to diversity of creeds it resembles. . . . This University will not demand of its officers and students the creed or press upon them the doctrine of any particular religious organization; but none the less—I should better say, all the more—it can exert through high-minded teachers a strong moral and religious influence."

This negative perception of church influence in higher education found explicit enactment in the removal of church officers from governing boards. At Harvard nearly half the seats on the Board of Overseers had been filled by clergy; by 1894 those fifteen had been reduced to one. The last Congregational minister had departed the Corporation ten years earlier. This was the accomplishment of Eliot, Harvard's first lay president. Yale's board had from the foundation been composed exclusively of Congregational clergy from Connecticut. In 1905 the first layman was elected, and by 1920 there were only four clergy left among the eleven on the Corporation. This was the accomplishment of Arthur T. Hadley, Yale's first lay president. At Princeton, where Presbyterian clergy had dominated the board, their representation was reduced by two-thirds by the end of the period we are studying. This was largely the accomplishment of Woodrow Wilson, Princeton's first lay president. And so it was, as well, at Amherst and Dartmouth and the rest of the Protestant colleges and universities. Clergy emerged from that period occupying only one seat out of every ten on their governing boards. James Kirkland,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Vanderbilt's first lay chancellor, was acting quite within the mainstream of his peer institutions when he drew his board away from the bishops in 1910.

It should also be noted that this only followed upon a severe reduction of clerical presence and dominance on campus. At the time of the Civil War, 262 of 288 college presidents were clergy. A survey of campuses of the time suggests that somewhat more than a third of the faculty were ministers. The proportion of graduates entering ministry from places like Harvard, Yale, and Princeton (at Harvard it had stood at 70 percent in the earliest days), which as late as 1830 amounted to about one-third, had plummeted by 1876 to one in thirteen.

It was the explicit belief and claim of each of these presidents, as it had been of White and Gilman at Cornell and Johns Hopkins—and as it would be of Kirkland at Vanderbilt—that the absence of ecclesiastical governance rendered their universities and colleges nondenominational *but Christian*: indeed, they were freed to be more authentically (and surely more wisely) Christian than before. It would, they believed, be all gain and no loss.

The estrangement of Vanderbilt from the church required two antipathetic forces: an oppressively uncomprehending atmosphere among church officers, and an administrator decisive and deft enough to remove them as the last obstacles to his pursuit of excellence for the college or university. In this respect it seems to embody an experience that is typical of the other mainline Protestant foundations.

Second, there was a president determined to raise the institution to a higher cubit of excellence who saw the ecclesiastical establishment as a real or potential adversary to his project and rival to his power.

Bishop McTyeire was himself both an intellectual and a bishop, and in his unique position as both president of the Board of Trust and chief executive officer he disposed of unchecked power. Neither his fellow bishops nor the Board nor the faculty could stand in his way. Nor were they likely to wish to do so, since his administration occurred at a time when the new university's initial affluence was large enough and the university model still modest enough for the energies of growth to be well absorbed.

But President McTyeire held office at a time when Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Yale, Michigan, Brown, Princeton, and the other colleges that had just entered upon the ambition to become universities presented a model which the Southern Methodist Church had no ambition to pursue, no resources to finance, and probably no readiness to permit. Kirkland, his successor, took office with the conviction that Vanderbilt was called to follow the lead of those reforming universities. To do so would mean wresting the institution and all its constituencies out of their traditional norms and expectations, and this meant an exceptionally effective and decisive chief executive.

It was exactly in these years, the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, that colleges such as those mentioned made the break with their past and were transformed into universities, whereas others like Wesleyan, Union, Haverford, Randolph-Macon, and Kenyon did not. A chief difference was that the former, unlike the latter, were led by chief executives of exceptionally sturdy ego who, in their campaigns to consolidate enough power to make a radical break with their collegiate past, used that power as well to sever any capacity of the church to obstruct their personal sovereignty.

What catalyzed the circumstances at Vanderbilt was the leading presence of a resourceful and ambitious administrator who saw clearly that the church was a hindrance, not a help, in the pursuit of all the academic goals he set before himself. To gain the university's freedom from the churchmen he forewent clarity in his public utterance in order to conceal as long as possible from his traditional constituency the full outcome of what he was doing. Inevitably the moment of crisis arrived when ambiguity could no longer blur the issue. Because of the inability of church officials to engage him intellectually, the confrontation became a matter of sheer control. When Kirkland won, one might say that it was not the university that gained power, but the chancellor himself, since in order to achieve his transformative program he had had to manage his own governing board to the point where they could present no real threat to his personal authority.

The Methodist bishops, as a group, were not really adverse to the devout Methodist layman, Kirkland. Nor were their understated concerns to preserve the Methodist identity of the university designed to undermine his authority. But it was their reserved power, usable in a last resort, which he saw as the only threat that could bring disaster upon his campaign to make Vanderbilt an institution of the highest rank.

The irony in all this, however, was that the "full outcome" went quite beyond Kirkland's anticipation: affecting not merely the governance of the institution but its very character. His intention was that it be laicized, but it was secularized as well. His intention was that it no longer be sectarian, but the result was that it was no longer Christian or religious.

Charles Eliot saw the new universities educating, no longer just the clergy or the other traditionally learned professions, but the bankers, industrialists, engineers, statesmen, and scientists. For that new kind of education a new kind of leader was needed. It was not that the older presidents lacked great, even autocratic, authority, but that the present task was so formidable: the institutions had to be made over entirely, and made answerable to new constituencies. Stronger men were required, he wrote in the very year

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he assumed Harvard's presidency.

> The American colleges have taken, and still take, their presidents from the clerical profession almost exclusively. . . . It is gradually becoming apparent that even the colleges are suffering from this too-clerical administration. Fortunately for the country, education is getting to be a profession by itself. For the discharge of the highest functions in this profession, the training of a divinity student, years of weekly preaching, and much practice in the discharge of pastoral duties are no longer supposed to be the best, or at least the only, preparation. Several other classes of men are now as cultivated as the clergy. As a class, ministers are as fit to be suddenly transferred to the bench at forty-five or fifty years of age, as they are to be put at the head of large educational establishments.

Eliot somewhat overstates his case in omitting mention of numerous clerical executives who had come up through the academic ranks as scholars and teachers. What he meant, in his put-down of parson-presidents, was that the churches were not providing leadership for the new universities any more than they were providing financial subsidy. Circumstance did raise up a generation of exceptionally sturdy chief executives, each of whom led his institution away from the possible superintendency of a founding church: Wayland at Brown, Eliot at Harvard, Hadley at Yale, Wilson at Princeton, William Jewett Tucker at Dartmouth, Hyde at Bowdoin, William Rainey Harper at Chicago, G. Stanley Hall at Clark, David Starr Jordan at Stanford, F. A. P. Barnard at Columbia, and James Kirkland at Vanderbilt.

Third, the estrangement from sponsoring church occurred at a time when the funding the church may have provided was clearly inadequate for the new academic ambitions of the university, and when new, secular sources were offering an infusion of funds.

The Vanderbilt crisis came at a time when the advancement of the university required massive financial help: help which the church was unable or unwilling to provide, but which was available elsewhere . . . on certain conditions. The Carnegie Foundation's program to fund professorial pension funds was, as we have seen, available only to institutions that were nondenominational. Only fifty-one institutions seemed, at first, to qualify. The Foundation then specified, however, that a college that was merely "in sympathy" with a church would not be excluded. There was an immediate wave of schools that renounced their denominational allegiance in favor of "sympathy" in order to qualify for the grants: colleges such as Dickinson, Goucher, and Bowdoin. Hofstadter and Metzger observe:

> In many places, church control was an incubus which the college was attempting to throw off, or which it endured merely because the charter made remedial action difficult. In few institutions was it reckoned a positive, necessary good. When the Carnegie Foundation inquired as to "whether denominational connection or control ministers to the religious or intellectual life," the respondents in the denominational colleges declared "almost without exception that such connections played little, if any, part in the religious or intellectual life of the student body."

The one benefit the churches might possibly have provided that would almost surely have sustained their governance and influence over the universities and colleges was financial subsidy, whether as direct grants from the churches or as gifts from affluent church members. The churches, however, were mostly meager funders of their schools; what they gave amounted to only a token part of the budgets each college had to balance annually.

Fourth, there was a transfer of primary loyalty from the church to the "academic guild," especially on the part of the faculty.

Vanderbilt was founded at the very time that the German universities had introduced the research doctorate as the prescribed training for a more serious academic career. Yale, Michigan, and Cornell were specifically and often mentioned as models to be followed, away from the liberal arts colleges and their more casual attitudes towards scholarship. Leading faculty were understood to be closely acquainted with their best peers at leading universities, and recruitment looked only to those research institutions. This quickly brought the Vanderbilt community to the point where it could criticize the church from the standpoint of the academy, yet lacked any inclination to criticize the academy from the standpoint of the church. This proved to be a point of no return.

The shift from a clerical to a lay president, from a church executive to an academic, also drew Vanderbilt to appreciate the one professional guild more than the other. And in a season when churchmen were looking askance at the university for its libertine secularism, and intellectuals were looking askance at it from the opposite direction for its narrow sectarianism, Vanderbilt academics were at pains to deny both charges, but with this difference: While they denied both the norms and the facts of their ecclesiastical critics, they embraced the norms and denied the facts of their unbelieving critics. At a time when their colleagues who spoke for the church were conspicuously incapable of giving the faith a good account in the eyes of the learned, the Vanderbilt academics preferred to dissociate themselves from their religious leaders rather than take up their cause as

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

allies and persuade them that sound scholarship was God's good servant too.

As a result, the university people had unwittingly transferred their primary sympathy and professional loyalty to the cultured despisers of their own church.

The Anglo-American model, set by the earliest foundations—Harvard, William and Mary, Yale, etc.—had been a college primarily for the education of future clergy. One of the motives for establishing new colleges was distrust between the churches, or between parties within the same church. Yet there was little that was specifically church- or faith-specific in those colleges. Academically, the colleges offered mostly Latin, Greek, and mathematics. The collegiate curriculum offered no theological courses; future ministers acquired that later, in apprenticeship to an older divine or in a divinity school. For undergraduates, there was just the obligatory set of lectures on moral philosophy, often given by the president himself, typically to seniors. There was no pastoral system to speak of, save for obligatory chapel.

If the colleges were Christian it was due, not to their program, but to their immersion in the conventional piety of the surrounding church. The church was not so much *in* as it was *round about* a college. The Christian character of the early American Protestant colleges was nothing very reflective. It might never have been publicly asserted with much animus were it not for the invariable resistance of students to compulsory worship and punitive discipline, both of which had recurring need of justification by appeal to the godly character of the college.

The colleges were not only *for* the future clergy but were conducted mostly *by* the clergy. Schoolteachers in colonial America and for years afterwards were typically parsons in need of another source of income. Indeed, until the 1890s the teaching faculties of the state universities continued to include sizable proportions of clergy. But in a society perceived as amiable to the Protestant conventions, there was little evangelical zeal or countercultural determination in these colleges. They were ecclesiastical because they were clerical, and they were clerical because learning at this level was traditional for scholar-parsons. They did not assert the church's faith; they presumed it.

It is ironic that the age when the colleges threw off the churches was really the first time, had they wished it so, when the churches could have sponsored an educational endeavor that was both intellectually and religiously vital, intentional, truculent, and integrative. This was a time when theology was beginning to mature to the point where it might have been strong enough to provide the unity and spunk in an institution of strenuous and innovative scholars. It was for want of any rigorously intellectual churchmen that the clergy were, in both their minds and those of the reformers, content to be identified with the furtherance of mediocrity.

Those who might have spoken for the church, and many who did, had the misfortune to range themselves in opposition to the movement to liberate the curriculum from "dead" languages and inapplicable mathematics, a reform led by men such as Francis Wayland of Brown, Charles Eliot of Harvard, and James McCosh of Princeton. As Freeman Butts observed: ". . . where the conception of a liberal education was firmly grounded upon religious and intellectual authority and discipline, the prescribed curriculum was more likely to be maintained longer against the inroads of the elective system with its attendant doctrines of freedom and flexibility." Thus the interests of the church were identified with opposition to an enlarged curriculum, and were defended by men who appeared as nay-sayers to all that smacked of imagination in higher education.

American elite culture was beginning to show itself skeptical and even covertly contemptuous towards Christian belief. The church officers were not learned or prophetic enough to read these signs of the times and had no imaginative sense or desire to be generous and eager patrons of a more purposeful (and costly) establishment. When the colleges and universities might—for the first time in America—have been purposively and competently engaged in formulating a higher culture within the churches, the churches lacked the competence and the determination to have it so.

All this came to crisis in the years immediately preceding Vanderbilt's renunciation of church governance. The governance that the angry General Conference wanted to have and sued to retain was not what would have done the church any good in the days to follow, for it had narrowed its view of what it meant to be Methodist to things like a religious test for all faculty and disciplinary control over students. Absent any larger vision of Christian education, this program was unrelievedly negative, and assured the educational reformers that the church had no stomach for ambitious scholarship.

Fifth, erosion of the will to consider active communion in the church as a requisite or even a qualification for admission to its several constituencies—governance, administration, faculty, and student body—extinguished the university's ability to consider itself a unit of the church.

The fact that without the Biblical Department Vanderbilt's student body included only a minority of Methodists could be construed in either of two contrary ways: either the University had failed to attract its native constituency, or it had been so academically successful that others were crowding in. Under either interpretation, an educational institution that enrolls less than half its students from within its sponsoring church begins to be an external activity of that church.

In the matter of faculty appointments, the critical

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

issue was not simply the dwindling proportion of Methodists (and their fractional presence in the professional schools), but the growing conviction that it was impertinent even to consider someone's membership in a community of faith to be a professional credential qualification pertinent for a faculty position at Vanderbilt.

The fact that leadership positions (deanships) had been filled more rapidly than faculty positions by non-Methodists made it all the less likely that religious identity could be effectively favored in faculty recruitment.

Paradoxically, Methodist presence was strongest on the Board of Trust, yet this body had been so co-opted by the chancellor that its members acquiesced in his view that overt deference to the church in any effective way would be adverse to Vanderbilt's academic ambitions. Thus, by unnoticed but inexorable depletion, Vanderbilt lost the ability to affirm in the first person plural that it was Methodist. The inertial force of custom prolonged the existence of religious observances: required chapel, behavioral discipline by church standards, pastoral activities such as YMCA centers. But the formal rupture with the church, in the belief that there could be a Christian house of learning bound by no communion to an actual church, made these activities inappropriate, and after a generation of increasingly awkward continuance they had to be eliminated.

This entire process illustrates well how formal, structural principles are followed, sometimes with considerable delay, by the actual social changes which they prescribe. For example, the charters of schools like Union, Columbia, Cornell, Princeton, Brown, and Michigan all provided that no religious test could be used in appointments. Yet for years there were religion-based norms that clearly limited what faculty could profess or how they could behave—including, in some instances, to what church they could belong—that excluded candidates from appointment at these institutions. Only later, when self-conscious identity shifted and the official rule was appealed to in dispute, did practice actually conform to the formal principle. Likewise, the structural disengagement of the universities from their churches preceded by at least a generation the functional sequestration of religion on campus to individual and private status.

It seems not to have been noted how powerful a change it was for the person presiding over the college or university no longer to be able (or, before long, willing) to preside over the educational community in prayer or worship. What Eliot called a "friendly but neutral" attitude toward religion simply did not have the stability he and his contemporaries imagined. Laicization need not entail secularization, but in this case they were inevitably linked.

Sixth, there was a progressive devolution of church-identifiers: first from Methodist to generically Christian, then to generically religious, then to flatly secular.

It was never considered by Kirkland that any formal bond between the university and the church was required to make Vanderbilt an effectively Christian university. In fact, it seems to have been his hope that by drawing back from the bishops' reach Vanderbilt could retain what was best in Methodism while protecting itself from the worst—which for higher education meant the streak of anti-intellectualism in the clergy. Kirkland eventually succeeded in renegotiating the church-campus relationship exactly as he wished, and he did not understand that he had destabilized it, that the formal break with the church began a process of alienation that inevitably would run its course to total secularization.

Kirkland's effort to finesse his program led to a purposeful blurring of nomenclature, and eventually the rhetorical slide ran from simply "Methodist" down through "ownership," "sponsorship," "patronage," "support," "affiliation," to "relationship." In an atmosphere where an effective bond to the Methodist Church instinctively evoked references to bigotry, exclusion, narrowness, sectarianism, and selfishness, there was an effort to describe the relation to the church as inefficaciously as possible.

During the period when a college simply functioned as a gathering of the church, with its foibles and deficiencies as well as its advantages and virtues, its Christian identity seemed not to require affirmation or reflection. The church held quiet title. It seems to have been precisely later when many colleges, unmoored from their sponsoring communities of faith, began to drift out into ever swifter currents of learned disdain for faith, that their officers began to assert volubly as never before that they *were* Christian. They reached out for a vocabulary that was indistinct enough not to make them accountable to anyone, but with a familiar-enough ring of piety to be reassuring. But the evidence shows beyond a doubt that such collegial Christianity as had existed began to lose vitality once there was no church link.

Then, when the severance was complete, the educators had no difficulty in interpreting their institutions' relation to the churches as no more than historical. We have already noted Eliot saying this at Harvard. The Princeton newspaper, on the occasion of the election of Woodrow Wilson as its first lay president, had claimed: "Princeton is and always will be religious." Wilson, the minister's son, who led prayers as soon as he took office, made it promptly clear that Princeton was not religious by dint of any continuing bond with a church: "Princeton . . . is a Presbyterian college only because the Presbyterians of New Jersey were wise and progressive enough to found it."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Seventh, in its anxiety to appeal to one constituency (the state, or the intellectual elite, or noncommunicant students, faculty, or donors) while not antagonizing another (the church or its communicants on campus), the academy replaced its religious identity with reductionist equivalents.

The years of Vanderbilt's youth were a time when most Protestants lost conviction about the particularities of their churches. Whatever had been the historical or doctrinal issues that had splintered the children of the Reformation into so many tribes and clans, those defining distinctions had a faint grip on the minds of bright Christians in post-bellum America. The absence of an established church and of the antagonisms it would inevitably have aroused, plus the dominant nationalism which for many Americans was a sacred allegiance that exacted a loyalty higher than their churches could—both of these influences made the specific differences between the Protestant churches seem to liberals not only insignificant but indecent.

What is more, the post-Enlightenment knack of reducing Christianity itself to vague, generic qualities hardly distinguishable from gentle manners or sound citizenship (about which more below) yielded a foundational notion of Christianity—an "essence," it was often called—so insubstantial that it could hardly sustain any specificities or provoke any controversy at all. In the early Vanderbilt period this all combined to leave a bright and ambitious scholar of liberal Protestant inclination wholly unaware of any particular advantage his church might offer to his college or university. At Vanderbilt as elsewhere, "sectarianism" and "denominationalism" were invariably negative terms, suggestive of exclusive access, censorship, and obstructive ecclesiastical overlords.

During his struggle for independence Kirkland wrote: "I have never denied our Methodist allegiance, I have never denied our Methodist history, but I have maintained that greater than Methodism was the cause of Christ and that the call for service in His name was greater than the call to the service of the Church." The Board of Trust, in affirming him in the struggle, gave some sense of what "service in His name" would mean: ". . . our chief concern is to promote the highest type of Christian scholarship and Christian character. . . ." Nowhere in Kirkland's writings can we find that he acknowledged any intrinsic benefit for the mind in Methodism. But when he moves from this "sectarian" concern to regard Christianity transcendent, here too there is no exploration of the faith which would suggest that it was illuminative of the mind. Thus he was reduced to seeing Christianity as indistinguishable from the repertoire of the cultivated American.

At Vanderbilt the constituencies were reassured that the university was persisting in its primal Christian commitment because of high standards in academics, or a liberal or broad or thorough curriculum, or freedom from dogmatism, or the cultivation of moral character, or social conscience regarding racial integration or the relief of poverty, or decorum and discipline in fraternities and at football games.

The most appealing and frequent surrogate for religious faith was moral: the university would persist in its dedication to the cultivation of moral character. This was expressed in various ways. Hadley of Yale: "It is, I think, the distinguishing characteristic of a gentleman that he accepts self-imposed obligations. . . . It is this that constitutes the fundamental character of a Christian." Tucker of Dartmouth thought religion would cultivate in the educator rightmindedness (clear thinking undistorted by prejudice, avarice, or vanity) and service (the capacity to give moral inspiration to students, especially those in the "distinctly commercial callings"). Compulsory chapel service, explained Yale chaplain Anson Phelps Stokes, is "a factor of social importance in making the college feel its unity by bringing together all its students daily, and of moral importance in requiring that men must be up and dressed at an early hour, a serious deterrent to dissipation." Wilson defended the chapel requirement at Princeton, explaining that "it has been regarded of the essential tradition of the place to give this flavor to the day's appointments."

This, of course, was an account of moral character which saw it as a substitute for Christian faith and community, rather than its outcome. What is more, it did not relate moral character to the mind at all. Christianity was thus doomed to be extracurricular. Earl Brill has astutely noted that "the major defect in the religious life at both Yale and Princeton was its lack of integration into the academic life itself. Religion was regarded as a kind of diffuse atmosphere. It was seldom subjected to rigorous analysis or evaluation." It could not be otherwise, for generic Christianity must always be a diffuse atmosphere. The moral equivalencies imagined as its goals and evidences functioned, in fact, as secular surrogates for sacred convictions and commitments.

Eighth, theological studies and church ministry were set apart from the academic center, a strategy which they took to be an enhancement of their autonomy, but which functioned as a banishment into marginality.

Kirkland strove to extract financial support from the Southern Methodist Church for the one element at Vanderbilt in which it could be supposed to have a direct interest, the Biblical Department. When that failed, the department was both an academic liability (as the least scholarly unit in the university) and a financial one (as unlikely to attract endowment from any other source, and a possible obstacle to the university's ability to receive funds from the state and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

certain foundations). The dean and faculty welcomed their redesignation as a nondenominational School of Religion, which then exposed them to almost total isolation when the church withdrew recognition of its right to prepare ordinands.

It might seem that in this respect Vanderbilt was untypical. For just as they were becoming secularized some new universities and some colleges were looking to establish or reinforce their "religion" departments with newly serious biblical studies. These departments were generally acceptable to the other arts and sciences departments because they fostered studies that were philological, historical, and comparative, and had dropped the older confessional courses that were expositions of or exhortations to the Christian faith. And in several institutions free-standing divinity schools were absorbed into the university.

Thus there were two quite distinct styles of religious instruction on the campuses: disinterested, nonnormative studies, conducted in a regular academic department, and ministerial studies based on an assumption of shared commitment, in marginal divinity schools. Yet despite minor structural differences at Vanderbilt and elsewhere there was an inflexible understanding at work: that a rigorous academy would not harbor learned discourse about religion in its central precincts unless conducted with the systematic detachment of nonbelievers. This was but a logical application of the principle of secularization itself, which wished neither to sponsor nor to countenance any overlap of the community of academic inquiry with the community of credal conviction. The divinity schools typically served as reservations or compounds where overt dealings with faith could be sequestered.

Ninth, it has been active Christians, not hostile secularists, who were most effective in alienating the colleges and universities from their communities of faith.

The transformation typically occurred in three stages. The first change, enacted by Christians without any intention of extinguishing or even compromising the Christian character of the college or university, consisted in muting all overt claims of the academic institution to be functioning as a limb of a particular church. Statements, decisions, and symbols that had been public, explicit, and unapologetic became private, silent, and bashful.

The period which followed, initiated by well-meaning and believing administrators of the first generation, was a time of high morale, because academic standards and aspirations were on the rise, funding and prestige were up, and the residual religious atmosphere was durable enough (even somewhat more sophisticated) to reassure the reformers that the intellectual gain had been without religious loss. Faith was mute but present.

It was only later—usually about a generation later—that a new cadre of intellectuals, whose obedience was to a rational empiricism with no hint of bashfulness in the exercise of its articles of faith, transformed an institution whose original identity could no longer be confessed or asserted into a secularized academy. This was the third stage. It is worthy of note that public faith, unlike an agnostic exclusion of faith, cannot survive without public profession.

The reformers had unwittingly deprived their institutions of any capacity to retain their Christian identity when exposed to a secularist faculty in the third generation. Ambitious but improvident leaders had suppressed their schools' Christian immune systems, and since the virus of secularization would not seek out these now-defenseless institutions until the professional personnel could be replaced by scholars predominantly of no faith or a hostile faith or an intimidated faith, the reformers had no way of understanding how much farther their actions would carry beyond what they intended.

Robert H. Knapp and H. B. Goodrich noticed some time ago this three-phase process of secularization in the liberal Protestant colleges. During the first period religious expression was naive and censorious, resources were limited, and intellectual disciplines undeveloped. In the second period there was a decline in religious observance and moral discipline, a revision of curriculum favoring newly specialized disciplines, and a heightened interest exhibited by educators and students in affluence: the former for new resources and the latter for more remunerative careers. This was a period of keen morale. In the third period the institution is wealthy and cosmopolitan, and religious discourse and expression is extinct.

The conclusion of this essay, to appear in next month's issue, will set forth how the pattern of change in liberal Protestant colleges and universities outlined above seems now to be underway in evangelical and Catholic institutions.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Israel Among the Nationalisms

Robert A. Licht

With the apparent demise of Communism, if not of socialism, the other political pathology of modernity, nationalism, is returning to center stage. If scientific socialism carries the "progressive" idea of human universality to its extreme, nationalism carries the "reactionary" idea of historical particularity to its extreme. To put the matter differently, where socialism runs contrary to human nature, nationalism too much encourages it. Nationalism, then, is the more dangerous and more virulent political pathogen because it truly moves masses of people, whereas the dubious claim that socialism commands the support of the masses has issued mainly from the remote province of the intellectuals.

In the Middle East, the conflict with Iraq has demonstrated the continuing appeal of Pan-Arab nationalism. Although the regimes of the area fear Iraq, the popular support for Saddam Hussein rests on the perception that he alone is capable of confronting Western domination in what to the Arabs are its two most pernicious forms: Israel and the United States. The conflict between Israel and the Arabs may then be viewed as a microcosm of the problem that resurgent nationalism will continue to pose for liberal democracy, because it appears to be both a conflict between nationalisms and between nationalism and liberal democracy. In this essay, I will bring together the two issues: the conflict between Arab and Jewish nationalism, and the conflict between liberal democracy and nationalism.

I

The term "nationalism" is often confused with the problem of "nationalities." There have always been nationalities or "peoples" or tribes or, loosely speaking, "races" or, as some have called them, "primordial groups." Such have always been characterized by a love of their own and by xenophobia. This is only to say that "custom" and "convention" are "natural" to mankind. But nationalism as a doctrine that identifies the nation with the state and in which, as Elie Kedourie has written, "language, race, culture, and sometimes even religion constitute the primordial entity" is a relatively recent development.

It is not possible to understand nationalism as a doctrine in the Middle East—or anywhere, for that matter—except as a consequence of what has come to be called "modernity." Modernity is a peculiarly European or Western phenomenon, connected with what we called "enlightenment," the scientific revolution, and modern, especially liberal, political thought and arrangements. Modernity in its root sense may be characterized as the opinion that antiquity as such has no inherent authority, whether in the form of custom, philosophy, or revealed religion. Nationalism, which is a doctrine of historic continuity, is itself a consequence of radical *discontinuity.*

At the same time, the facts of human behavior have not changed. David Hume, in the essay *Of The First Principles of Government,* writes that men are governed by opinion. Of the governing opinions, it is the opinion of the "right to power" that is most prevalent, and this may be traced, he says, to "the attachment which all nations have to their ancient government, and even to those names, which have the sanction of antiquity. . . . *Antiquity always begets the opinion of right.*"

The implicit tension between the presumption of modernity, that antiquity as such has no authority, and the given fact of human behavior, that "antiquity always begets the opinion of right," is the breeding ground of nationalism. It is the consequence of the situation that "antiquity" is not what it used to be, because "modernity" has intervened. As a doctrine, nationalism may be characterized as rediscovered, or

ROBERT A. LICHT *is Resident Scholar and Director of the Constitution Studies Project at the American Enterprise Institute.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

invented, or imagined antiquity. As such, it is not merely nostalgia. It is, in fact, a consequence of the deepest philosophical teachings of modernity, of the replacement of nature by history and of a certain radical view of human autonomy or freedom. Its motivating passions are two: what we have come to call a "crisis of identity," and a political grievance.

This is especially true of the Arabs. The effect of European political and economic domination in the region has been intellectual and political turmoil that has undermined the self-esteem and self-sufficiency of a traditional, religious way of life. Intellectually, modernization may be described as the motion from external domination of the Arab world by European powers to internal domination by European thought and the psychological consequences of that motion. It is in this sense that we may speak of Arab modernization as Arab *Westernization*, which appears as the simultaneous absorption and rejection of the West. It is Westernization that brought the crisis of identity and, eventually, the doctrines of nationalism, to the Arab Middle East.

This is the kernel of truth in the grievance against Western "colonialism" and "imperialism" even in their literal absence. This is not a regional phenomenon; it is global. There is virtually no place in the world that has not been intellectually "colonized" by the West and its extraordinarily powerful tradition of inquiry and science.

An excellent introduction to this complex topic may be found in Sylvia G. Haim's *Arab Nationalism: An Anthology* (1976), especially in its perceptive introductory essay. In Haim's subtle but incisive study, she shows that, paradoxically, Arab nationalism (or, more precisely, Pan-Arab nationalism) begins as Pan-Islamism. Pan-Islamism supplied two crucial premises for the emergence of nationalism: the idea of Arab Muslim solidarity, and the legitimization of secularized politics. Arab solidarity or homogeneity derives from Islam, which was the only bond of unity the Arabs had against European domination. But Islam so understood, as Haim observes, could be "transformed . . . into an ideology which the shrewd statesman" could use for his political ends. Religion thus becomes a tool of political ambition, and politics is redefined as a secular activity. In Islam, this was a development that ran counter to tradition, which from the time of the Caliphate had seen no separation in principle of religion and politics.

There were both liberal and reactionary strains of Pan-Islamism. The liberal view emphasized that there is a harmony of progress (or reason) and religion. The reactionary view has been more significant. It taught religious reform and return, a "puritanical revival of strict Islamic practices and religious fervor." The connection of *reform* and nationalism is that it implied a return to the *Arab* origins of Islam. In the context of the Ottoman empire this indicated an invidious distinction between Turk and Arab. The Turks, and the Ottoman system of government, were held responsible for failing to protect the *umma*, "the body of all the Muslims," from European encroachment.

With the end of World War I, the demise of the Ottoman Empire, and the beginning of a new era of European involvement via the League of Nations, the ideology of Pan-Arab nationalism began to emerge. One may get some sense of the direction the ideological development took—and its intellectual dependence on Western thought—from this statement of Sami Shawcat, the Iraqi Director General of Education, in 1939.

> The history of our illustrious Arab nation extends over thousands of years, and goes back to the time when the peoples of Europe lived in forests and over marshes, in caves and in the interstices of the rocks; at that time our own ancestors used to set up banks, sculpt statues, and lay down canons of law; they invented the first principles of medicine, geometry, astronomy, the alphabet, and the numerals. . . . We find inscribed the basic law given by one of our ancestors, Hammurabi. . . . This took place before the Torah, the Gospels, or the Koran. In the same way we find that everything makes us lift our heads high when we consider the histories of the Semitic empires formed in the Fertile Crescent—the Chaldean, the Assyrian, the African, the Pharaonic, or the Carthaginian. . . . These empires and their dependencies are all our property; they are of us and for us, and we have the right to glory in them and to honor their exploits.

A reflection on Pan-Arab nationalism both as a doctrine and a political practice reveals that it is burdened by two fundamental and, as events have borne out, unresolvable dilemmas of identity or loyalty. One dilemma is religious. On the one hand, as Haim remarks, "It would not do to identify Arabs and Islam completely, since Islam contained many more people than the Arabs." But, on the other hand, an autonomous theory of Arab nationalism "would seem to replace Islamic loyalty—which, so far, has been the only one to move the Muslims."

Pan-Arab nationalism also paradoxically offered a solution to the problem of identity of Christian Arabs, as Haim observes:

> We find [Christian writers] . . . saying with even more vehemence and eloquence that the relation between Islam and Arab nationalism is intimate and that Islam should be the special object of veneration for all nationalists.

From the Muslim side, however, if the outcome of nationalism would be a secular regime in which Christianity or other religions might have a claim to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

equality with Islam, it could in no way be acceptable. Under Islamic and Ottoman law, Christian and Jewish communities enjoyed a protected status but had to accept legal, civic, and political inferiority. Reconciling Islam to the idea of the political equality of religions—that is, "liberalizing" and modernizing Islam in the manner of Western Christianity—has remained a perhaps insurmountable difficulty.

The second dilemma of Pan-Arab nationalism is the matter of nationalities, or "regionalism." On the one hand, the "Arab nation" as ideologically defined calls into question conventional boundaries. This certainly reflects in part the historical truth that the boundaries of states in the Fertile Crescent and Arabian Peninsula have largely been arbitrarily established in recent times. Prior political loyalties in the area were traditionally tribal, religious, and familial. Nonetheless, these new artificial entities have developed a real political existence where the Pan-Arab idea has not.

The dilemma of regionalism vs. Pan-Arabism was addressed in two ways: the inclusion of Egypt in the fold of Pan-Arab nationalism, and the founding of the Arab Ba'ath party.

The earliest geographical description of a reborn Arab nation placed its boundaries at the Indian Ocean to the south, the Tigris and Euphrates rivers to the east, the Taurus mountains to the north, and the Mediterranean and Suez Canal to the west. Egypt was not included. The Egyptians themselves, whose national identity is of the greatest antiquity in the region, did not identify themselves as "Arab," although their language is Arabic and their predominant religion Islam. Arab nationalists, however, came to see Egypt as vital to their Pan-Arab aspirations. Egyptian opinion, and finally policy, came around to Pan-Arabism by the mid-1940s, and after the 1952 coup against the monarchy became, in Haim's words, "its most zealous advocate." Under Nasser, Egypt's preeminence in the Arab world was secured, and it twice attempted (and failed) to realize dreams of Arab unity through creation of a United Arab Republic. But even Nasser's commitment to Pan-Arabism was hedged by his commitment to Egyptian national interests. In his "Philosophy of the Revolution," he described Egypt as the center of three circles: Arab, African, and Islamic. The subsequent history of Egypt, as of the other states of the region, confirms the priority among Arab nations of commitment to their own national goals.

The other major element in the Arab national movement was the founding in 1940 by Michel Aflaq, a Christian Arab, of a political movement, the Ba'ath Party, based on his doctrines of nationalism. The unique contribution of Aflaq to Arab nationalism lies in what Haim calls "his uncompromising vision of a superhuman and transformed life as the end of political action." For Aflaq, nationalism must be revolutionary, that is, have a revolutionary program of implementation, and a revolutionary goal. The Ba'ath party is revolutionary, totalitarian, and socialist. Ba'ath means "reawakening," and the word is religious in origin, referring to the resurrection of the dead. According to Aflaq, the revolution "is a prime propelling power, that powerful psychic current, without which the reawakening of the nation is not to be understood." The Arab nation is characterized by successive rebirths: "Revolution is the opposition of the future to the present." The future, however, is illuminated by and (in a certain sense) identical with the past. "The ascendant march on the road of the revolution is the only possible means for us to join up with our past. . . . Our past was a revolution, and we will never reach its level or meet with it except through revolution."

Revolution is not merely a political or social movement; it is a permanent condition of the soul, a perpetual reawakening or rebirth. The soul, one might say, in order to become authentic, must become absorbed by the nation, must struggle and sacrifice for the nation. This is its true freedom. The love of which Aflaq speaks as the end or goal of nationalism requires, as its means, a mercilessness, "a powerful hate, a hate unto death of the persons who embody an idea contrary" to the national idea. "Any action," he says, "that does not call forth in us living emotions and does not make us feel the spasm of love, the revulsion of hate, that does not make our blood race in our veins and our pulse beat faster is a sterile action." Youth is the key to this revolution: the young must rebel against a humiliating present in which their elders acquiesce for the sake of a future that will restore a glorious past. They must act ruthlessly for the sake of love. Aflaq's work may thus be epitomized in two of his teachings: that nationalism is "love before everything else," and that "we do not recognize a middle solution."

As regards the religious dilemma, it is by now evident that the Islamic political revival sees both nationalism and socialism as essentially threatening because they are secular. As regards the dilemma of nationalities, the Ba'ath party which was to unite all the Arab lands is now common only to Syria and Iraq, who have little else in common except their mutual enmity.

But this is not to suggest that nationalism has not succeeded in some important way. Quite the contrary: It has legitimated a secular, revolutionary politics in a land of religious traditions. In this sense "modernity" has come to the Arabs in its most virulent form. On the other hand, the republican traditions of the West, the tradition of the moderated politics of governing and being governed in turn, has had no similar success.

II

Palestinian nationalism under the PLO umbrella, born of a profound social and political crisis, is an offspring of Pan-Arab nationalism and is subject to the same dilemmas. The people of the region have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

become "Palestinians" to the other Arabs, to themselves, and to the world. But they also identify with and derive much of their political animus from the condition of being "Arab," that is, "oppressed" by European imperialism. Similarly, the Palestinians have experienced the same historic religious differences and divisions between religious and secular perspectives as other Arabs. The tide of Islamic fundamentalism, while rejecting the West, also rejects the "democratic and secular" nationalists precisely because they see them as corrupted by the satanic West. Were the Palestinians to vanquish Israel tomorrow, these fundamental divisions would still remain as political dilemmas urgently requiring resolution. The prospects for that appear remote. There is emphatically *no* Palestinian identity as "citizen" except in Israel. That is as much, if not more, a consequence of historic Arab reality as it is of the Palestinians' dispossession by the Jews.

What is true of Palestinian nationalism is also, in its own way, true of Jewish nationalism. Israel, and without doubt "Zionism," is also an expression of nineteenth-century European nationalism resting on "historical claims" and is burdened by some of the same unsavory aspects of that heritage. David Hartman has observed that

> Zionists both revolted against Jewish History and saw themselves as continuing it. . . . The attachment to the ancient historical past of the Jewish people goes together with the yearning for the creation of a new Jewish personality. There is therefore a deep need among secular Zionist ideologists to find historical legitimization for their revolution. Yet they cannot find it . . . through the religious community. . . . Rather they must step back into the earliest framework of Jewish history, in which the Jewish people developed and grew in their own natural society.

But two points about Jewish nationalism that distinguish it from Arab and other nationalisms should be emphasized. First, the situation of the Jews in a Europe at once liberalizing and nationalizing was unstable and becoming untenable, as events in this century have made clear. If the Jews were a nation, they were a nation without a state. If, on the other hand, the Jews were not a nation, then European liberalism should have provided security for them as individuals and as a religious or cultural minority. It did not.

Second, Jewish nationalism was born out of the promise of liberalism, not as a *reaction* to it, as was the case with the other doctrines of nationalism in Europe. The same crisis of identity that affected everyone exposed to modernity deeply affected the Jews of Europe as well, but their hopes lay in liberalism, that is, in a doctrine of universal right (which many of them took to its socialist extreme). For the Jews, the failure of European liberalism, under both nationalism and Communism, was in the end catastrophic. Nevertheless, the birth of the Jewish state was a *de facto* achievement of liberalism. Israel has achieved a form of liberal democracy, or more precisely, a distinctive form of constitutional government, inherited both from its own internal communal traditions and the European experience of the Jews. That they sought refuge as Jews was out of necessity; that they sought it in Israel was a combination of religious tradition, nationalism, and opportunity. The chief point, however, is that Israel's *political* legitimacy derives from its liberalism, not from its nationalism.

III

It has been said that Israel and the Palestinians are locked in a tragic conflict of two nationalisms with irreconcilable claims to the same land. This is a regrettable formulation, since it would seem to identify "nationalism" with rival claims to political legitimacy. But nationalism must not be confused with political legitimacy. It is necessary to distinguish between the alleged right of a people *to be* or *to have* a state, that is, political *autonomy*, and the right or title of the particular regime *to govern*, that is, political *legitimacy*. It is this very distinction that nationalism, as a doctrine, obscures.

Political legitimacy, that is, the right or title to govern, cannot be founded on historical, religious, racial, or linguistic claims to a particular piece of land. Each of these claims assumes, first, a questionable principle of right which, by definition, belongs to only one particular group, and, second, speciously assumes the unity and homogeneity of that group. But political legitimacy, when it exists, is always a solution to the inescapable heterogeneity and diversity of even the most racially, culturally, and linguistically homogeneous societies. What is meant by *liberal constitutionalism* is just such a modern solution to the most ancient political problem. That is why political legitimacy, or the right to govern, is properly identified with a constitution, written or unwritten, that has the ongoing consent of the governed.

The conflict between nationalism and liberal democracy, then, may be recast as the conflict between nationalism and constitutionalism both in its root sense of *politeia*—the making of an enduring political whole out of diverse parts—and in its modern sense of the universal consent of the governed and the security of their rights. The premise of nationalism, on the other hand, is *homogeneity*, or exclusion. The difference is not that nationalistic regimes lack written constitutions; it is rather that the principle of the regime, by definition, denies the premise of constitutionalism, *consent*. Nationalism favors totalitarianism internally and aggression externally.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Of consent, we may say that it is a phenomenon that rests upon the need of mankind to secure the most vital interests of life and property. To secure these, people consent to government. If it be asked where liberty is as an "interest," the answer is that consent may itself be the expression of liberty, and this in two senses: that it must be given freely, that is, rationally and deliberately, and that it requires some form of participation in governance. Since political self-government in this sense is what is meant primarily by liberty (putting aside for the present philosophical disputes as to what true liberty or freedom must entail), we may say then that consent, properly understood, indeed rests on and necessitates the securing of life, property, and liberty.

We Americans, because of the principles of our Constitution and its unique success, tend to think that constitutionalism resting on consent can rest only on individual rights. We do not recognize group rights as inherently just. Despite the considerable element of truth in this view, it is unreasonable to insist on individual right as the *only* foundation of a sound constitution. The need for consent applies to communal arrangements as well as to individuals. It is in this sense that the modern liberalism of individual right, founded upon self-proclaimed anti-utopian foundations, has itself a utopian element—it does not take men as they are.

Universal individual right, or what we may call modern natural right, is not a complete solution to the political problem, since it cannot adequately address the question of "primordial communities" as indissoluble elements of political heterogeneity. Indeed, it is precisely this weakness of the immune system of liberalism that the virus of nationalism exploits, as we can see, for example, in both black and "Aryan" expressions of nationalism in the United States.

Nevertheless, the modern political problem cannot be solved without recognizing individual right. Modern natural right radicalizes the political problem of unity and diversity in two ways. First, *heterogeneity* is radicalized by identifying it with *individuals*, not with groups and their claims to ethnic, religious, territorial, or racial antiquity. Second, *homogeneity* is radicalized by identifying it with rights. People are the same not in respect of the circumstances of their birth, but by having the same—equal—rights, irrespective of their many other differences. Although the doctrine of natural right is often criticized as leading to "atomized" individualism, it also must be appreciated for the solution to the political problem that it makes possible. An individual may have rights that constitutionally derive from those of his community, but his rights in some sense must also be understood in law as prior to that community. This recognition becomes a principle of justice in the constitutional regime, necessary for continuing—and universal—consent. Moreover, insofar as a constitution recognizes the free association of individuals beyond their respective communities for political ends, the principle of individual right transcends (but need not supplant) communal rights.

In this twofold way—the assurance of justice and free voluntary association—may be discovered the modern notion of the citizen. All liberal constitutional regimes implicitly must recognize and secure the natural *individual* rights of life, liberty, and property. This is accomplished by the mechanisms by which government is limited in its powers. The *political* implementation of the doctrine of natural rights thus requires them to be axiomatic in the construction of successful liberal constitutions, as Alexander Hamilton observed when he wrote that the U.S. Constitution, even without the proposed Bill of Rights, "is itself in every rational sense, and to every useful purpose, a BILL OF RIGHTS."

Thus, although consent may be either communal or individual, it seems to me that the condition of global modernity requires the presence of the latter even in the most traditional of societies. The divisions in traditional societies brought about by the consequences of modernity, primarily between secular and religious, between religions (which under the conditions of modernity have a claim to legal and political equality), and finally even between the individual and society, are inevitably a part of the diversity for which constitutionalism represents the only possible unity.

It is, of course, easier to speak of consent than to implement it. The implementation of consent requires the greatest of political virtues and the most prudential political science. There are specifiable and rational conditions for seeking and granting consent. But there are other considerations, not always specifiable or rational, for withholding it. Honor, ancient tribal and religious differences, and revenge come to mind. This reminds us as well that not all human customs and traditions favor constitutionalism, much less modern or liberal constitutionalism. Modernization may be inevitable, but liberal constitutionalism is not. The paradox of liberalism in the "old" world is that in order to be liberal—that is, to secure universal rights—the regime must first be particular. The modern dream of full human autonomy and freedom cannot finally escape human nature.

IV

We are now a certain theoretical distance from the conflict between Arabs, Palestinian Arabs, and Jews. Nevertheless, we may say that we have recast the problem from an insoluble conflict of nationalisms to that of a common need for constitutional solutions to their respective problems. This common need cannot, however, have a common solution. It is nevertheless possible to speak to the practical issues from the theoretical perspective.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For Israel to remain in the occupied territories can have only two justifications: nationalism and security. The former denies the very premise of Israel's own political legitimacy. The latter cannot finally be solved unilaterally by Israel, but requires that the security interests of the Palestinians—which are in the end also their fundamental political interests—be secured as well.

Toward this end, Israel might withdraw—either unilaterally or through a negotiated settlement—from much of the territories. There will surely be great pressure for some solution to the Israeli-Palestinian problem in the aftermath of the Gulf crisis. In any proposed solution, much will depend on the internal capacity of the Palestinians to resolve their inherent constitutional problems. Israel cannot solve the Palestinian constitutional problem, although it has been suggested that a combination of federal and confederal arrangements between Israel and the territories might be possible. Indeed, this might be the best possible outcome.

But neither this nor any other solution can be brought about without prior Palestinian political development. The true grievance of the Palestinians—indeed, of the Arab world in general—is not "humiliation," but the inability to establish a just regime. No matter how difficult this will be, it is the necessary next step if the Arabs are to reconcile themselves to modernity. For there is no alternative to such reconciliation. *That* reconciliation must precede any between Arab and Jew, or the Arabs and the West. In this sense, Israel may be said to be a blessing to the Arab nations, since Israel truly is the outpost of liberal constitutionalism, that is, of healthy modernity, in the region. FT

Careless Flying

Luke 12:24-26

I

I have been considering
the ravens, who live
without worrying
and have no bins or barns

And have no reaping machines.
Yet they are fed well—their bodies
sleek, gloved in black silk.
With what a minor tempest

They startle and settle,
yet they are the poets of motion.
Like folk songs their wings wheel
and hover, careless

As falcons, I am their
anxious scribe, listening myself
into their coarse
cries, storing the separate

Notes in small black spaces
at the back of my skull,
God, if I were a bird I think
I would stop worrying!

Enough to wear, to eat. And one
more hour of life is, you say,
not worth the care. So, I'm
a bird. Nested in down,

I think I will float in a
dream of flight all night,
waking at the gold call of the sun
from the world's lip.

II

St. Francis could name me
his small sister.
He wasn't a bird either
but he would know how to fold

His hands around my minor
warmth, then toss me, his arms
splayed, and let the air
catch me easy as feathers.

Watching ravens rise to God,
black steps moving on gold
ladders, gave him enough wonder
it took all his life

To exult in. His praise
escaped often to heaven, his eyes
following. Eventually he himself
learned to fly, lifted by birds.

Luci Shaw

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Undertakings and Promises: An Anatomy of Sexual Ethics

Philip Turner

For Christians, as for everyone else, the topic of sexual ethics is today one of widespread confusion, contention, and uncertainty. In this essay I propose to deal with the specific question of the kinds of promises and undertakings people ought to make when they engage in sexual relations. But I want to do so in a way designed as much to bring into focus the reasons Christian people seem unable to make much progress in the current debate as to defend my own position.

I will put forward three theses, each of which is intended to reveal the anatomy of the arguments now being employed in the debate over sexual ethics.

I

My first thesis is that progress will not be made in the current debate until people become more aware than they now are of the fact that Christians are divided both among and within themselves not only by differing views of the specific promises and undertakings that ought to accompany sexual relations, but also by two views of the relation between promises and undertakings themselves.

The two views are roughly as follows. Those of a more "traditional" bent are inclined to say that a sexual relationship is, in a moral sense, appropriate only within an undertaking the terms of which are "ordained" by God and in accord with right reason. This undertaking has a moral claim upon people prior to any particular intentions, promises, or undertakings on their part. On this view, undertakings precede promises in the sense that what one may rightly undertake is a moral precondition for any promises that rightly may be made.

Those of a more "liberal" frame of mind reverse the moral order of undertaking and promise. They hold that our undertakings are the result of, rather than the precondition for, the promises we make. On this view, what we undertake issues from what we promise, and what we promise issues from what, for one reason or another, we decide upon as the best course of action "all things considered." In this case, undertakings issue from the choices and agreements of autonomous individuals, and the moral constraints that apply to the promises they might make do not derive from an undertaking given but from the need to preserve from harm and loss of liberty other makers of promises.

An illustration may help clarify the differences between these perspectives. A most useful one is the marriage ceremony found in the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*. This rite, which gives expression to the position of the Church of England concerning the matters under discussion, contains an exhortation that rather clearly states "the causes for which matrimony was ordained." These are:

> First . . . for the procreation of Children, to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and to the praise of his holy Name. . . . Secondly, . . . for a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication; that such persons as have not the gift of continency might marry, and keep themselves undefiled members of Christ's body. . . . Thirdly, . . . for the mutual society, help, and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity.

PHILIP TURNER *is Professor of Christian Ethics at the General Theological Seminary in New York City.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Two things about this list are of particular significance for present purposes. The first is that the "ends," "goods," or "causes" of marriage are not dependent upon the particular intentions, choices, and promises of the parties involved. In the case of marriage, promises do not determine undertakings, but undertakings promises. We may assume that the rite implies something rather similar about sexual relations.

Nevertheless, the second thing to note is that though the "causes" for marriage are clearly stated, those for making sexual relations an aspect of marriage are at best implied. Indeed, the only "cause" for sexual relationships given even indirect expression is the procreation of children. This also is the only good of sex suggested by the homily adopted by the Church of England as an explanation of the estate of marriage.

These observations force one to ask a rather disturbing question. Does it turn out that the teaching of the *Book of Common Prayer* (and so also the Church of England) is that procreation is the only "cause" for which sexual relations were ordained by God and consequently the only justifiable sexual good one may rightly promise to pursue? If one adopts a method similar to that of a "strict constructionist" in the field of constitutional law, one is forced to say that such is indeed the position of both the Church of England and of the other churches of the Anglican Communion who still use this or a similar rite (as well, of course, as of non-Anglican Christians who hold comparable views).

One need not, however, interpret the *Book of Common Prayer* as a strict constructionist would. There are at least two considerations that cast doubt upon the aptness of a strict construction. The first is that one of the purposes of the rite adopted by the Church of England at the time of the Reformation was, in Massey Shepherd, Jr.'s formulation, to "check 'the excessive admiration of celibacy' that characterized the medieval Church in its view of marriage 'as merely a condescension to weakness.'" The second is that, in many writings roughly contemporary with the rite of 1662, a connection is made not only between sex and procreation but also between sexual relations and the good of marital union. In *Holy Living*, for example, Jeremy Taylor speaks of sexual appetite and its place within marriage in this way:

> In their [husbands' and wives'] permissions and license [for sexual intercourse], they must be sure to observe the order of nature and the ends of God. *He is an ill husband, that uses his wife as a man treats a harlot,* having no other end but pleasure. Concerning which our best rule is, that although in this, as in eating and drinking, there is an appetite to be satisfied, which cannot be done without pleasing that desire, yet since that desire and satisfaction was intended by nature for other ends, they should never be separate from those ends, but always be joined with all or one of those ends, *with a desire of children, or to avoid fornication, or to lighten and ease the cares and sadnesses of household affairs, or to endear each other*; but never with a purpose, either in act or desire, to separate the sensuality from these ends which hallow it.

Taylor's text, coupled with what we know about the intentions of those who framed the Prayer Book rite, suggests that a relation between sex and marital union was at least a part of the mind of the Church of England at the time the rite of 1662 was framed.

The rite can, therefore, sensibly be taken to mean that, by solemn vow, each couple entering the estate of marriage agrees at the same time to certain sexual undertakings. These are ordained as aspects of that estate (and they are unity, procreation, and perhaps even the cultivation of a certain sort of well-being). These undertakings are the "causes" of sexual relations within marriage, and are, consequently, demanded of married people by the purposes of God. They are sexual undertakings that have priority over particular promises and are meant to predetermine the sorts of (sexual) promises one may rightly make.

The implications that the rite of 1662 may contain for marital and sexual relations have been presented in such detail because (on either a strict or loose construction of the text) the ethical content of this rite is so far removed from the moral notions most people now hold. Yet despite the great differences between the moral views prevalent in the seventeenth century and those characteristic of the present era, the claim is often made that Western Europe and North America continue to work within the same moral tradition that characterized that now distant period.

In their recent discussion of casuistry, Albert Jonsen and Stephen Toulmin seek to establish just such a continuity.

> The discriminations and distinctions embodied in the current sexual morality of Western Europe and North America do not represent any radical break with earlier moral considerations and attitudes. Rather, they reflect changes in the "qualifications," "exceptions," and "rebuttals" to which older rules are regarded as now subject. Nothing at the heart of the so-called sexual revolution, for instance, weakens traditional moral objections to sexual relationships that are unloving and exploitive, or to promiscuity that is divorced from true human affection. Indeed, in its constructive aspects the rethinking of sexual morality and family life over the last thirty or forty years has no more broken with earlier traditions of moral reflection than the debate about nuclear weapons has cut us off from all the experience embodied in the traditional analysis of the preconditions for a just war.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> Rather, it refines a traditional analysis of sexuality and family life further, in the light of new developments in society, technology, and psychology.

The position of Jonsen and Toulmin is a common one. It is, however, false. The truth of the matter is that present views both of the relation between promises and undertakings and of the specific promises and undertakings appropriate for people involved in a sexual relation represent a very different moral tradition—one in which what one undertakes results from what one promises rather than one in which what one promises ought to be determined by what one may rightly undertake. This view of moral relations, like that of Jeremy Taylor, comes also from the seventeenth century, but represents a new departure in moral thought. It originated in the contractarian moral philosophy of Hobbes and Locke rather than in the reforming theological culture of the Church of England.

The very wording of Jonsen and Toulmin's account of the development of the tradition displays a discontinuity of moral tradition rather than the continuity they claim. "Traditional objections" to the sorts of illicit sexual relationships of which they speak are not, as they suggest, that such relations are "unloving," "exploitive," and "divorced from true human affection." The traditional objection is that illicit sexual relations are ones divorced from their appointed ends, goods, or causes and as such are both contrary to God's will and right reason.

For example, as the quotation above clearly indicates, though Jeremy Taylor certainly believed that sexual relations between husbands and wives ought to be loving, non-exploitive, and linked with true human affection, he did not believe the presence of these emotions and intentions to be sufficient in and of themselves to justify a sexual relation. Justification could come only on the basis of the "ends for which these relations exist," and these ends are not designated by sovereign human choice but by divine ordination.

The defining characteristic of the second and more "liberal" point of view sketched above is precisely that the "ends" for which these relations exist are not given by God. Rather they issue from the choices of those who, for various reasons, enter them. To my knowledge, no official liturgy yet exists that gives expression to this point of view, but there are many *ad hoc* and unofficial ones that do. There is, furthermore, an unofficial "magisterium" of theologians, both Catholic and Protestant, that has for some years now been persistent in its statement and defense. John Giles Milhaven spoke for many when he said:

> Love is no longer basically a trusting submission that searches out God's universal laws for human behavior and institutions. . . . Rather, the new trend sees God leaving it *completely* (emphasis added) up to [man] as to how things turn out. Christian "love," therefore, comes to mean that a [man] takes from God into [his] own hands *all* (emphasis added) responsibility for what happens. It is up to [him], not God, to figure out what will be good for those concerned and how this good can be realized, just as it is up to him, not God, to act and make the good a reality.

This is certainly the position we associate with Hobbes and Locke, and it is just this point of view that informs the two most influential statements of the second opinion to have appeared to date in North America. One is *Human Sexuality*, a study prepared for the Catholic Theological Society of America by Anthony Kosnick, *et al.*, and the other is *Embodiment*, a book by James Nelson.

The CTSA report argues that moral judgments are to be made about sexual relations on the basis of one "basic principle" and seven "values." The basic principle is "creative growth toward integration." Kosnick and his collaborators seek to give this rather vaguely defined principle more specific content by means of the seven values that are served when a sexual relation is indeed morally licit. Sexual relations serve these values if they are "self-liberating," "other-enriching," "honest," "faithful," "socially responsible," "life-serving," and "joyous."

One need not pause long over either the basic principle or the seven values to grasp their meaning. Sexual relations are justified on the basis of their contribution to the growth of the parties involved, and this growth is measured by the extent to which it liberates and enriches their lives. Exactly what it is that "liberates" and "enriches" one does not know. That which is "life-serving" is clearly relative to the peculiarities of the parties involved. The purposes lovers rightly pursue are the ones they themselves judge to be in their own best interests. Accordingly, moral license for a sexual relation issues from what produces good from the perspective of particular sets of lovers. Moral constraints are generated only by factors that might do harm by retarding growth, inflicting harm, or limiting the freedom of others.

The same thing can be said of the argument presented by James Nelson, though his basic principle is less obviously "self-actualizationist" than the one found in the CTSA report. The basic principle is "love" understood as "communion" rather than "growth toward integration." Loving communion is implemented by various sorts of linguistic expression. Sexual relations constitute one of the most effective and powerful forms of speech lovers have available to them.

As a form of communion-initiating and -sustaining conversation, sexual relations may be judged in a moral sense, according to Nelson, on the basis of several

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more specific "principles for sexual morality." The most important of these are (1) that (no matter what one's gender or sexual orientation might be) "physical expression of one's sexuality . . . ought to be appropriate to the level of loving commitment present in that relationship," and (2) that "genital sexual expression should be evaluated in regard to motivations, intentions, the nature of the act itself, and the consequences of the act."

The acceptable motive for a sexual relation is love, even though one is not told how to determine when a loving motive warrants sexual expression. If it does, however, the acceptable intention must be that "each genital act should aim at human fulfillment and wholeness." Fulfillment and wholeness involve emotional sustenance, healing, and growth for the parties involved. Acceptable acts are, in turn, ones that are not "loveless," which is to say "coercive, debasing to the other's sensitivities, utterly impersonal, (or) obsessed solely by physical gratification. . . ."

Taking account of consequences involves both taking responsibility for them and weighing them. Taking responsibility implies "responsibility to the ongoing relationship and its *particular* commitments and promises" (emphasis added). Weighing consequences means taking account of "probable effects for the wider community" in that no act is to "diminish the love and justice by which human community must exist."

Even this brief summary of Nelson's proposal makes three things plain. The first is that the good of "communion" breaks down during the course of Nelson's discussion of specific principles and becomes instead the good of self-actualization. Communion, it turns out, is not the end but the means to the more basic good of "fulfillment" and "wholeness" for individuals. When it comes to what we are "aiming at" in a given act, "communion" drops out of sight (and along with it any idea of a common good) and personal growth takes its place.

The second thing made plain is that, as agents pursue the goods they perceive best for them, undertakings succeed promises. Promises and commitments are explicitly said to vary with differing relations. Within relationships, the particular promises made spring from the particular intentions of individuals and define the undertakings that are to follow.

The third unavoidable observation is that restraints upon promises and undertakings are grounded in what will do harm to or limit the liberty of other promisers. Thus, Nelson finds it "extremely difficult to label whole classes of acts as inherently right or wrong" (because any act might produce some good for some particular agent), but he is prepared to say that sexual acts which prove in particular circumstances to be either coercive, debasing, or impersonal to the parties involved are wrong.

It should be clear by now that in the current debate over sexual ethics we are dealing not only with two views of the particular promises and undertakings sexual relations might involve, but also with two very different views of the nature of the moral life. These two views have created what Professor William Werpehowski of Villanova University has aptly called "the pathos of Christian ethics today." In the course of an extraordinarily sensitive discussion of abortion, Werpehowski says this:

> Yet the pathos of Christian ethics today is the difficulty of preserving an account of [the] goods of human relationship against their collapse into the desires or interests of autonomous individuals. Because there is so little consensus in liberal American society on the goods that fulfill persons apart from that of self-determining choice, there tends to be little sympathy with or understanding of the notion that persons flourish in and through patterns of relationship that are themselves taken to be normative.

Werpehowski's remarks capture the fundamental issue that underlies the current debate over sexual ethics among Christians.

The comparison drawn above brings this fundamental issue to light, but it also makes it possible to present with greater intelligibility the different views of the particular undertakings and promises that champions of the two positions say are involved in sexual relations. For those who still hold to a view like the one contained in the rite of 1662, sexual relations are to be undertaken only by men and women who have entered as well upon the larger undertaking of marriage. Both the wider undertaking of marriage and the more narrow one of sexual relations involve an extensive and intensive form of unity and, God willing, the procreation of children. The matter of these undertakings is not a matter of choice. The only choice one has is whether or not to enter upon them in the first place.

The promises by which people effect their choices to marry require that they not only share but also unite both their sexually differentiated lives and bodies and their worldly goods. They further promise, because they seek in their union a mutual society, to stay with this undertaking until parted by death, to involve themselves with no other person in a similar undertaking, and to show care for one another in all aspects of their union. On this view, the particular good of the parties involved in the undertaking of marriage is to be found within and subordinated to the common good constituted by the marital union itself.

The content of promises and undertakings thought appropriate for sexual relations in more "contemporary" moral thinking differs markedly from those just described. The specific promises most frequently mentioned are "commitment," "vulnerability," and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"care." These promises give expression to the "personal" character revisionists of the traditional ethic demand of a licit sexual relation. They serve also to protect the parties from abuse. Nevertheless, the particular purposes for which a couple might commit themselves one to another are open for negotiation as are their reasons for their being vulnerable and showing care.

Furthermore, the more traditional promises of permanence and fidelity are variously treated within the context of these revisionist proposals. Some (usually when seeking to justify sexual relations between single men and single women) insist upon fidelity but not permanence. Others (usually when seeking to create some moral space for sexual relations that are normally termed adulterous) insist upon permanence but not fidelity. Others (usually when seeking to establish the morally licit character of sexual relations between gay men) believe that commitment, vulnerability, and care do not require either of the above promises. Still others (usually when arguing for the propriety of sexual relations between lesbian women) speak of the desirability of both permanence and fidelity.

The varying treatment of fidelity and permanence received at the hands of "the new reformers" indicates clearly that the undertakings entered upon in each of these forms of relationship may (rightly) vary greatly from relation to relation. The particular undertakings involved issue from promises either made or implied, and these in turn give expression to private intentions known and shared by the parties involved. For the new reformers, particular good is not subordinate to common good. The reverse is rather the case. Furthermore, according to the new reformers, within a sexual relation of whatever sort, intentions, promises, and undertakings are (rightly) limited only by what may harm other autonomous agents or may decrease their liberty.

Now the sorts of things the protagonists in this struggle are apt to say in response to one another are well known. Defenders of the traditional view are eager to point out that "commitment," "vulnerability," and "care," as presented by the new reformers, are, when compared to the commitment, vulnerability, and care implied by marriage, quite limited in content. Traditionalists point out, further, that the new reformers make a division *in principle* between the sexual and marital goods of unity and procreation and thereby make licit forms of "love making" that have no necessary connection with "baby making" (and vice versa). Traditionalists also note that if the new reformers, as is usual, extend their arguments so as to include sexual relations between people of the same sex, they at the same time erase the moral significance for sexual relations of the gender-related differences between men and women.

In response, the new reformers are quick to point out that the traditional ethic has plunged people into precipitous and disastrous marriages. They note that it takes no account of the fact that in the present era an extraordinarily long period of time elapses between the onset of puberty and the age when marriage is possible and appropriate. They remind their hearers that there are now an extremely large number of permanently single people and that these people are sexual beings. They go on to point out that sexual relationships are "natural" to human beings as such and that it is wrong, and in most instances harmful, to deny anyone the good of such a relation.

These arguments and counterarguments are well known, but in the present debate the two sides rarely respond to the points their adversaries are trying to make. In America today, sexual ethics serves as an arena for political struggle rather than for moral debate. In this struggle, the two sides deliberately talk past each other, and, in so doing, make appeal to slogans designed to catch the public eye and get people marching on behalf of their point of view.

II

Let me try to intrude a moral debate into the present political struggle by proposing a second thesis which, one hopes, will further expose the anatomy of the arguments characteristic of the contesting parties. The second thesis is simply that the views of the new reformers have increasing appeal because they fit so well with contemporary notions about the nature of the "self."

What are these notions of "self"? Charles Taylor has made a convincing case in *Sources of the Self* for saying that there are three assumptions that, in combination, constitute the modern view. The first is that selves are not defined by their status and role in society, but by an inwardness that gives each self depths that distinguish it from other selves. The second assumption is that the self finds its proper arena for activity in "everyday life." For a meaningful existence, selves do not require a special social location, or the mythical landscape of heroes, or the heavenly one of saints. The third assumption is that each self has certain abilities or powers, and that the point of everyday life is to discover these powers and develop them in and through the activities of daily living. It is through plumbing the depths of the self and developing its powers in the course of daily living that the satisfactions of life come.

Accompanying these collective representations are three moral notions that both direct and limit the self's activities. The first is benevolence. Each person ought to act in as generous fashion as possible not only in relation to those close by but also in relation to all other selves. The second is equal justice. Each self has dignity and as such should be accorded certain rights that protect that dignity and allow the self to pursue its good without undue impediment. The third

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is the elimination of suffering. The moral world of the self is one that rules out suffering as an inevitable and, on occasion, even a useful part of life.

Already the "fit" between the views of the new reformers and contemporary notions of the "self" begins to appear. If the additional assumption is made that "sexuality" in some way defines the inner depths of the self, and if "sexuality" is a quality that gives character and resonance to the powers and abilities moral agents are to discover, develop, and exercise, then, *ceteris paribus*, it is immediately appealing to say that sexual relations ought to be pried loose from anything like an "order" that prescribes for them goods that are not matters of choice or that denies some people access to these relations *ab initio*.

Propositions like these seem neither benevolent nor just and they most certainly cause suffering. At a minimum, the traditional ethic, given our present social climate, produces a keenly felt insufficiency in those who are not involved in a sexual relation. In circumstances such as these, one easily assumes that one's life is wanting in a basic good, and for this reason alone, it makes no moral sense to most people today to say that whole classes of people who through no fault of their own either cannot or ought not to marry ought also to abstain from sexual intercourse.

Precisely these assumptions about "sexuality" are the ones Michel Foucault says accompany present-day notions about the "self." In the first volume of his three-volume *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault notes that "sexuality" is a word that now serves a purpose like the word "soul" did in the Middle Ages. In that period, people believed that one's "soul" united the various aspects of human identity and gave significance to that identity. Today, the word "sexuality" serves a similar function. Accordingly, "sexuality," "self," and "identity" are so closely linked by present usage that at times they virtually merge one with another. In the light of these observations, it is easy to understand why more and more people believe that to deny a sexual relation to oneself or another simply on the basis of marital status and/or sexual orientation is in fact to deny the "self" in a destructive and morally insupportable way.

It will not have escaped the notice of most readers that the ideas about promises and undertakings and those about the nature of the self which serve as the foundation for the position of the new reformers are precisely those upon which modern political society is founded. The point of social relations has become the pursuit of private life plans. This pursuit is limited only by the principles of no harm and no coercion. In short, it appears that the ideas about "self," "promises," and "undertakings" that, since the seventeenth century, have become increasingly dominant in the political realm have at the same time seeped into the more intimate spheres of life.

III

What then ought one to conclude about the spread of these ideas from the public to the private realm? The third thesis of this essay is that their appearance in life's more intimate spheres should be counted as both a gain and a loss, and that the argument about sexual ethics will not progress until note is taken of both.

The problem with traditional sexual ethics is that they often take too little account of persons. Men and women are too frequently simply submerged into undertakings. As a counter to this tendency, the appearance of a sexual self within Western consciousness is an important moral event. To have recognized that we are sexual selves, related in freedom to our ends, with depths to plumb, powers to be used and developed, and that we (all) can do these things in the course of everyday life is in fact a giant moral leap forward. The strength of the position of the new reformers is that it recognizes the good of this step.

The problem with their view is that it fails to recognize that a sexual self, liberated from any notion of undertakings that have a moral claim upon it prior to any of its particular intentions and choices, has no satisfactory way to make moral judgments about what it intends and what it chooses. It can only follow the prompting of its own depths, and so must appear like a dog chasing its own tail. Like the political self, the sexual self of modern consciousness appoints its own ends. No longer need it search out "God's universal laws," those divinely appointed undertakings through which human beings come to know their good and, by acting accordingly, grow up into the nature God intends for them. Rather, it is up to the autonomous self to "figure out what will be good for those concerned and how this good can be realized, just as it is up to [him], not God, to act and make the good a reality."

Differentiation understood in this way can only mean that the most insistent prompting of the self always is taken as definitive of the self's true nature and good. The self's depths are used to judge the self's depths, and this can hardly be a satisfactory position. To take this sort of view is to adopt the very dubious proposition that if one has desires and inclinations powerfully presented, if they portend no harm, and if they imply no coercion, then one's desires and intentions, by virtue of the strength of their presentation, are both "natural" and "good."

There is another problem with the new reformers' view of promises and undertakings, and it is that their limited extent and duration place in jeopardy the "wholeness" and "fulfillment" a sexual relation is supposed to procure. Because promises and undertakings are so closely linked in their minds with personal fulfillment and individual circumstances, both promises and undertakings may be limited (on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

occasion severely) in their extent and duration. Indeed, the view that sexual relations need only be "limited engagements" is central to their position. Limitation of one's commitment, vulnerability, and care is essential because the peculiar nature of each sexual self may demand limits if it is to pursue successfully its particular sexual good.

It is obvious that the liberty of individuals to pursue private good is the major moral concern of the new reformers, and in this respect their sexual ethic can be seen as a variety of the contractarian social ethic now increasingly characteristic of political society. I have tried to suggest that the moral gain of this view ought not to be dismissed. Nevertheless, the difficulty with the view of promises and undertakings implicit in the position of the new reformers is that the limitations they place upon the commitment, openness, and care promised and undertaken within a sexual relation are the very factors that most often compromise the personal wholeness and fulfillment people seek by making commitments, being open, and caring for another's well-being in the first place.

In short, a strong case can be made for saying that as both the common good of society and the particular good of citizens is now threatened by political voluntarism, so also both the common and the particular good of lovers is threatened by the voluntaristic and limited nature of the promises and undertakings that typically accompany sexual relations. In fact, despite a strong climate of opinion to the contrary, it is sensible to argue that, in both the public square and the bedroom, the traditional view that "persons flourish in and through patterns of relationship that are themselves taken to be normative" is in fact true, and that, in respect to its teaching about the undertakings and promises that ought to accompany a sexual (or political) relation, the church would do well to seek to preserve "an account of the goods of human relationship against their collapse into the desires or interests of autonomous individuals," and in so doing face rather than turn away from "the pathos of Christian ethics today." FT

Victory Near the Plaza

"Sherman Led by Victory"
Is a St. Gaudens statue,
A cast-bronze allegory,
With *Victory* as a woman
Pulling his horse's bridle
Out of a sculptor's stable,
Leading him off the pedestal
Into a bronze fable.

I used to think Sherman
A beautiful buffoon,
But the dark sincerity
Of angel and warrior
Has laid its hands on me.
In the end She always wins,
Here a bronze beauty
Cast by St. Gaudens.

Lawrence Dugan

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

History in the Past Perfect

Elizabeth Kristol

Is not the past large enough to let you find some place where you may disport yourself without becoming ridiculous?

—Nietzsche

It is nothing new for poets, painters, and philosophers to harken back to utopian "golden ages" when greatness or harmony flourished. The German Romantics were inspired by the ancient Greeks. The British Romantics longed for the pastoral beauty of pre-industrial times. The American transcendentalists thought that man was most fully himself in the presence of unspoiled nature. Novelists have depicted the innocence of primitive "island" peoples. Scientific socialists and political revolutionaries, too, have characterized their efforts as a corrective, a reformist attempt to restore society to its rightful founding values.

While previous utopian movements may have romanticized the past, they stopped short of rewriting whole chapters of world history at will. This is not the case with today's proponents of Afrocentrism, radical feminism, and "deep ecology," all of whom—in their own way and to their own ends—are thoroughly uninhibited about offering up entirely new versions of the past. In the case of the feminists and Afrocentrists, the driving force is primarily a desire to create an illusion of social and cultural power. In the case of the deep ecologists, there is more of a heartfelt wish to turn the clock back to a time when earth was untainted by the presence of man.

What is especially remarkable about these latest utopian accounts is that they are being put forth by groups that are ostensibly concerned with real-world problems crying out for real-world solutions. Feminists, black educators, and ecologists have difficult roads before them, as they seek to eliminate discrimination, improve the educational skills of minority children, and conserve our planet's resources. It is surprising, then, that they should be fretting, not about the best ways of dealing with these problems, but about things that may or may not have happened long ago.

ELIZABETH KRISTOL *is Associate Editor at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington.*

I

In his ground-breaking 1954 book, *Stolen Legacy*, George James asserts that what the West has come to call Greek philosophy actually derives from a body of teachings developed by the ancient Egyptians, who he believes were black. These teachings formed part of a "Mystery System," a cultic religious scheme of salvation. This secret order educated its followers in the mysteries of the arts and sciences, but—for secrecy's sake—forbade that any of these teachings be written down. As Greeks began to enter Egypt during the fourth and fifth centuries B.C., they gained access to ancient African wisdom and brought it back to their own land—a land that was far too turbulent, says James, to sustain the practice of philosophy. Everything that the West has come to associate with greatness—the achievements of the pre-Socratics, Pythagoras, Democritus, Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, advances in language, mathematics, medicine, and astronomy—all were stolen from the black Egyptians and claimed as their own by the Greeks.

This notion that Africa was the cradle of civilization and that much of what we consider Western thought actually derived from the early Africans has gained tremendous ground in the past decade, articulated most powerfully by Molefi Kete Asante of Temple University, Ali Mazrui of SUNY/Binghamton, Asa G. Hilliard, III of Georgia State, and Leonard Jeffries, Jr. of CUNY. Asante, chairman of Temple University's African-American Studies department and widely regarded as the founder of the current Afrocentric movement, paints a bright picture of life in Kemet (ancient Egypt). In his latest book *Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowl-*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

edge, he describes this ancient culture:

> [Kemet] contrasted sharply with the crude customs of northern barbarians and the incipient cultures of the East. Kemet was preeminent in art, literature, astronomy, geometry, and ethics—all roads actually led to Kemet. The achievements of Kemetic genius are found in the civilizing role it played in Africa and the world. The Kemetic people seemed to reason about every aspect of human activity. They did not lose themselves in wonderment nor in idle self-congratulation but in intellectual and artistic pursuits that would govern human ideas for many centuries. . . . We owe to them the basis of science, art, ethical teachings, religion, dance, monarchy, and ritual drama.

When the Greeks appropriated the knowledge of the Egyptians, they affixed their own terms to these disciplines, lending credence to the myth that they are Greek in origin. Nothing could be further from the truth, insists Gabonese scholar Theophile Obenga; the Greeks were actually "the last philosophers in the world."

Junior high school students studying from the popular Afrocentric text *Lessons From History: A Celebration in Blackness* encounter the following blanket assertions in the first seven pages of their book: "the birthplace of humanity is in Africa," "Africans founded the first university," and "the introduction of the lunar and solar calendars and the study of astronomy were made by Africans." They learn that Imhotep—not Hippocrates—"was the father of medicine." (Here some proof is offered: "Many history books say that Hippocrates was the first doctor. Imhotep lived in the era of 2800 B.C., but Hippocrates was not born until 2000 years later.") Students also discover that "Pythagoras did not create the theorem," that "the beginning of religion was in Africa," and that "it was only during the European Renaissance that Michelangelo was commissioned to paint Jesus White." They read the details of the Napolean-Sphinx encounter, in which "Napoleon was so jealous of this great feat he ordered twenty-one shells of fire aimed at the face of the Sphinx to alter its facial features so people would not know it was African." In addition to learning that the Africans, not Columbus, discovered America, they are taught that, throughout their history, "Africans used much of their intellect to build pyramids, temples, tombs, and universities. Europeans used most of their brains to develop military weapons."

Elementary school students across the country who are taught from the "African-American Baseline Essays" learn that the Ten Commandments probably originated with the Egyptians; that Aesop, Ramses, and King Tut were likely black; that Pushkin and Hannibal were of black ancestry; that Newton's theories on gravity and refraction derived from the work of Muslim scholars.

Correcting history, George James realized, would involve nothing less than a revolution in consciousness and would thus require a massive propaganda effort. James also recognized that any elevation of African contributions must be accompanied by a depreciation of Western achievements. The process of reeducation, says James,

> should be done by a world wide dissemination of the truth, through a system of reeducation, in order to stimulate and encourage a change in the attitude of races toward each other. In combining their efforts, both races must not only preach and teach the truth that the Mystery system of the African Continent gave the world philosophy and religion and the arts and sciences, but they must see to it that all false praise of the Greeks be removed: for this is the practice that has blind-folded the world and has laid the foundations for the deplorable race relations of the modern world.

Today's Afrocentrists are bolder still about the positing of an actual white-conspiracy theory. As Molefi Asante states, "Greece gained in prominence while Egypt fell in reputation due to a combination of European racism and chauvinism." In *Decolonising the Mind*, Ngugi wa Thiong'o advances the thesis that a "cultural bomb"—such as the one Westerners dropped on Africa centuries ago—is more dangerous to people than weapons. "The effect of a culture bomb," he writes, "is to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of nonachievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland. . . ."

Asa Hilliard, an educational psychologist at Georgia State, focuses on Western techniques of miseducation, including "temporal tampering" (such as discussing Hippocrates as if he preceded Imhotep); "isolated texts" (focusing on isolated European accomplishments in an effort to overshadow long-standing African achievements); and "creating illusions" (positing the existence of a race of people called the "Negro"). These and other Afrocentric assertions about historical events are by their very nature unprovable, since they rest on the two-fold assumption that the ancient blacks relied primarily on an oral transmission of knowledge and that any existing evidence has been routinely suppressed by whites.

II

Feminists have taken similar liberties with history. They have posited that all existing life forms descended from a single female DNA; that male life

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

forms owe their existence to the female life forms that created them solely to assist in reproduction and evolution; that women emerged from the primal ocean walking upright, causing men to evolve into upright hominids; that primitive women invented medicine, law, clothing, agriculture, trade, and fire.

According to Rosalind Miles, author of the recent *The Women's History of the World*, women were clearly better off in ancient times:

> Men in hunter/gatherer societies do not command or exploit women's labor. They do not appropriate or control their produce, nor prevent their free movement. They exert little or no control over women's bodies or those of their children, making no fetish of virginity or chastity, and making no demands of women's sexual exclusivity. The common stock of the group's knowledge is not reserved for men only, nor is female creativity repressed or denied. Today's "civilized" sisters of these "primitive" women could with some justice look wistfully at this substantial array of the basic rights of women.

But the main proof offered by feminist historians to support the idea of a golden age for women is the supposition of an ancient "goddess culture." For anywhere between 30,000 and 200,000 years, the theory holds, society was matriarchal, peaceful, and egalitarian under the role of the Great Goddess. (Here feminism dovetails with Afrocentrism in asserting that the original Goddess was most likely black.)

> Close your eyes for a moment and imagine a culture where there are no soldiers or defensive battlements. Instead, the people farm and create superb painted pottery and sculptures. Women serve as the religious leaders and family heads. . . . Neither sex dominates the other—they live in harmony and cooperation rather than competition. Spirituality is not confined to one day of the week. All of life is sacred and celebrated. And at the heart of this peace-loving, egalitarian, and earth-centered society is not a grandfather-like figure meting out justice from a throne in heaven, but the Great Goddess. . . .

This is how one journalist swoons in reaction to the writings of Marija Gimbutas, professor of European archaeology at UCLA and author of, most recently, *The Language of the Goddess*, a book that celebrates goddess-worshipping prehistoric societies. (This will soon be followed by *The Civilization of the Goddess: Europe Before Patriarchy.*) *The Language of the Goddess*, a glossy, lavishly illustrated, coffee-table book with an introduction by mythologist Joseph Campbell, is by no means the first bit of goddess literature to have made the leap from the pages of academic journals onto the shelves of Crown Books. Merlin Stone's *When God Was A Woman*, Shinoda Bolen's *Goddesses in Everywoman*, and Riane Eisler's *The Chalice and the Blade* are among the many books on the subject that are widely available and that are proving to be sturdy sellers.

Eisler's *The Chalice and the Blade*, a best-seller currently in its eighteenth printing, maintains that the notion and practice of dominance was foreign to the goddess-worshipping ("chalice") world until the Indo-Europeans (the "blade") came on the scene. So popular has this book proved to be that the author has just introduced a companion workbook that helps the readers apply "chalice" principles in their everyday life.

In a recent interview in *EastWest* magazine, Eisler praises Gimbutas for her path-breaking work in feminist history, and especially for her decision to elevate speculation over scholarship (Gimbutas describes her unique blend of research and interpretation as "archeomythology"). Eisler cites Gimbutas' "courage" in interpolating such sweeping theories from such scant factual material on the period: "A lot of people have looked at the data," Eisler says, "but they've been far more tentative."

Numerous feminist theologians, New Age-influenced writers on feminist spirituality, historians, and literary critics have accepted this notion of a matriarchal "golden age." "When God was a woman," writes Rosalind Miles, "all women and all things feminine enjoyed a higher status than has ever been seen since in most countries of the world. Where the Goddess held sway, women did so too." Poet Adrienne Rich praises the gynocentric cultures in which Woman was venerated. "Let us try to imagine for a moment," she writes, "what sense of herself it gave a woman to be in the presence of such [venerable] images. If they did nothing else for her, they must have validated her spirituality. . . . They told women that power, awesomeness, and centrality were theirs by nature, not by privilege or miracle; the female was primary."

Artist Judy Chicago, in the introduction to her famous sculpture, "The Dinner Party," harkens back to the time when "Mother Goddesses were worshipped everywhere" and when life was "egalitarian, democratic, and peaceful." The Fall was a bitter one: as Chicago describes it, "female-oriented agricultural societies gradually gave way to a male-dominated political state in which occupational specialization, commerce, social stratification, and militarism developed." Gimbutas explains that the pre-Indo-European peoples were centered around "the moon, water, and the female," whereas the marauding Indo-Europeans glorified "the sharpness of the blade." They "exulted in the making of weapons, not pottery or sculpture." The Indo-Europeans, many feminist scholars agree, were threatened by the success of matriarchal society. Various psychoanalytic explanations are offered for why this was so, but most feminist historians agree

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with the assessment of author Charlene Spretnak that patriarchy is an historical anomaly, a distortion of the natural order. (Still others, like Rosalind Miles, maintain that males themselves are a biological deviation from the natural order.) "At the moment [men's] awe turned to envy, resentment, and fear, patriarchy was born," Spretnak writes. "Since men could never possess the elemental power that women have, they sought to hoard all the cultural, i.e., invented power."

III

The feminist reconstruction of the past has found a ready ally in the growing ecology movement. This was only to be expected, given the emphasis feminist historians place on the symbiotic relationship between woman and nature (the Great Goddess is variously known as the "earth goddess" or "earth mother"). The analogy is an ancient one, but it is here given a distinctly political twist: Just as the egalitarianism of ancient goddess-worshipping societies reflected the harmonious relations between human beings and their planet, so in patriarchal societies where women are exploited by men, the earth is abused and violated by "male" forms of agriculture, technology, and weaponry. In a similar vein, a recent book, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, explores the relation between carnivorous eating practices and the social domination of women.

Spretnak—a prolific author and lecturer on feminist issues—observes that ecofeminism is the only logical response on the part of women interested in issues of gender, culture, and history; of women who reject all forms of dominance theory, including Marxism; and especially of feminist theologians who are inspired by nature-based religions of neopaganism and goddess worship. Once there is an acknowledgment of the intricate relation between the subjugation of women and the subjugation of nature, feminists will have no alternative, says Spretnak, but to "work for ecopeace, ecojustice, ecoeconomics, ecopolitics, ecoeducation, ecophilosophy, ecotheology, and for the evolution of ecofeminism."

It stands to reason that if the devaluation of women and the devaluation of nature went hand in hand with the rise of civilization, so too must their revaluation—with a little help from a vision of a pre-civilized golden age. But the precise nature of this vision makes the ecofeminists uneasy allies of the "deep ecologists." For while radical feminism rejects the dominance and inegalitarianism of patriarchal society, it is still concerned with restructuring society in a manner that will benefit human beings. This is not extreme enough for the deep ecologists, who maintain that earth must be saved for its *own* sake, not for man's—or even woman's.

The utopian vision of the deep ecologists needs to be viewed in the context of its sweeping critique of Western civilization. The notion of "deep" ecology (as opposed to "shallower," aesthetically motivated forms of ecology and environmentalism) was introduced by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess in 1973. It has only recently gained prominence, though, as a logical extension of both the feminist and the ecological critiques of civilization; while ecofeminists are halfway there in seeing men as the problem, deep ecology fulfills the vision by recognizing Man as the problem. Deep ecology, as formulated by its key proponents Bill Devall and George Sessions, "is a process of ever-deepening questioning of ourselves, the assumptions of the dominant worldview in our culture, and the meaning and truth of our reality." Tulane University's Michael Zimmerman characterizes it as seeking to "overturn the major Western categories that are apparently responsible for humanity's destruction of the biosphere: *anthropocentrism, dualism, atomism, hierarchalism, rigid autonomy*, and *abstract rationalism*."

If the deep ecologists pose the most radical critique to emerge from all the anti-Western Civilization movements of the past two decades, they are also the most explicitly utopian—or, as they say, "ecotopian." They share with feminists the belief that a Golden Age existed some 600 million years ago, but they differ from the feminists in showing a much stronger inclination to recreate life as it existed in primitive times. (The slogan of the ecotoge group Earth First! is "Back to the Pleistocene!") In *The Tender Carnivore and the Sacred Game*, Paul Shepard presents a stark ecotopian view of life in hunting-gathering societies: "Most people seem to agree that we cannot and do not want to go back to the past; but the reason given is often wrong: that time has moved on and what was can never be again. The truth is that we cannot go back to what we never left. Our home is the earth, our time the Pleistocene Ice Ages. The past is the formula for our being. Cynegetic man is us." Shepard is forced to wonder, "Can we face the possibility that hunters were more fully human than their descendents?"

In the latter part of his career, the eminent anthropologist Loren Eiseley embraced increasingly ecotopian views, asserting the need for man to reenter "the first world from which he originally emerged," that "sunflower forest he had thought merely to exploit or abandon." So in tune were early men with their environment, noted Eiseley, that they "projected a friendly image upon animals: animals talked among themselves and thought rationally like men; they had souls."

As Devall and Sessions assert in their basic text on the subject, "Developing ecotopian visions is part of our environmental education. . . . Ecotopian visions present affirmations of our bonds with earth." There are even ecotopian novels which, like all utopian fictions, serve as a criticism of the current age: the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

best-known of these are Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* and *Ecotopia Emerging*. (The former is set shortly after the secession from the United States of Oregon, Washington, and northern California—and that's not even the utopian part.) Ecotopian Gary Snyder, a prominent member of the bioregionalism movement, has called for a transformation of "the five-millenia-long urbanizing civilization tradition into a new ecologically sensitive harmony-oriented wild-minded scientific/spiritual culture . . . nothing short of total transformation will do much good." Shepard's utopian vision for the future is more concrete: he has developed a detailed plan to remodel life after early hunter-gatherer societies, urging that the entire world's population (which he would like to see stabilized at eight billion people) cluster along the coastlines of the continents, leaving the interiors untouched by human habitation.

The task of modern (i.e., post-Pleistocene) man, says Eiseley, is "how nature is to be reentered; how man, the relatively unthinking and proud creator of the second world—the world of culture—may revivify and restore the first world which cherished and brought him into being." This task of "reentry" into the golden age is most eloquently explored in the work of ecotheologian Thomas Berry. Berry has the ability both to reflect upon the history-making process and to engage in it himself, at one point maintaining that while the violence of our age is, well, *violent*, "in prior ages the violence of the natural world was "essentially creative in the larger arc of its unfolding."

Berry is aware of the crucial role a historical narrative can play in a people's self-understanding. In *The Dream of the Earth*, he observes: "We are in trouble now because we do not have a good story. We are in between stories." The values of Western civilization are repudiated, and people are at a loss. Thus, "we must begin where everything begins in human affairs—with the basic story, our narrative of how things came to be. . . . We need a story that will heal, guide, and discipline us."

Western society has always depended heavily on history for its own self-understanding, notes Berry, and a culture's history is intimately linked with its future possibilities: "a new historical vision is emerging to guide us on our way to a more creative future." The creation of history is itself an historical event—the ecologists' new description of the past is "the supreme historical event of recent times: the discovery of a new origin story, the story of the universe as emergent evolutionary process over some 15 billion years. . . ." While we are limited by the fact that "our own experiences can never again have the immediacy or compelling quality that characterized this earlier period," we can strive for a "post-critical naivete."

IV

The deep ecologists' critique of Western civilization—indeed all civilization—is so profound that it is, for all practical purposes, transpolitical. The same cannot be said for the utopian critiques posed by the Afrocentric and feminist movements. What is so striking about these two groups is the extraordinary ease with which they rewrite the past, and the boldness with which they invoke the truth of origin stories whose ink is barely dry. In their hands, the old-fashioned notion of history as the discovery of facts—that is, a search for truth—has given way to a notion of history as the creative narratives of oppressed peoples—that is, a striving for power.

That is particularly obvious in the rhetoric of feminist historians. As authors Monica Sjöö and Barbara Mor assert, "We believe that nothing could be more politically relevant than knowing why we got where we are now, by seeing how we got here and where we began." To know that a matriarchal society once existed "is to give its future existence not only credibility, but empowerment; we need this confidence of precedence not only as a core of spiritual vision, but as the core of our political vision."

Feminist histories and spiritual writings on the goddess are replete with references to "power" and "empowerment." Judy Chicago provides the most succinct explanation for this. "Our heritage is our power," she states. "We can know ourselves and our capacities by seeing that other women have been strong. To reclaim our past and insist that it become a part of human history is the task that lies before us, for the future requires that women, as well as men, shape the world's destiny." As Charlene Spretnak says, "Women are coming together to cultivate the powers that can result from exploring matrifocal heritage. . . ." Merely believing that goddesses once ruled, explains art critic Gloria Orenstein, enables women to "reconnect with a source of empowerment" and "evoke the energy needed to create the new situation."

This persistent notion of the past as power source leads many feminist and Afrocentric historians to attribute near-magical qualities to their utopian visions. Molefi Asante states that "the Afrocentric method seeks to transform human reality . . . the Africalogist knows that the results of the Afrocentric perspective are so profoundly revolutionary in the field of knowledge that it virtually constitutes new knowledge." Africalogy is a "liberating discipline." This is not so very different from George James' quaint hope, nearly four decades ago, that a new history focusing on African achievements would not only lift the veil of prejudice between whites and blacks, it would "emancipate" black people everywhere "from their serfdom of inferiority complex."

Contemporary Afrocentrists do not use the term "inferiority complex" (although they frequently

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

speak of the need to increase self-esteem). In more ways than they would care to admit, though, they share James' dream of transforming a people's station in life by bestowing on them a glorious past:

> Now that it has been shown that philosophy and the arts and sciences were bequeathed to civilization by the people of North Africa and not by the people of Greece, the pendulum of praise and honor is due to shift from the people of Greece to the people of the African continent who are the rightful heirs of such praise and honor.
>
> This is going to mean a tremendous change in world opinion and attitude, for all people and races . . . would change their opinion from one of disrespect to one of respect for the Black people throughout the world and treat them accordingly.
>
> It is also going to mean a most important change in the mentality of the Black people: a change from an inferiority complex to the realization and consciousness of their equality with all the other great peoples of the world who have built great civilizations. With this change in the mentality of the Black and White people, great changes are also expected in their respective attitudes towards each other, and in society as a whole.

James' efforts to instill among blacks a sense of self-worth through meditation on the past continue today. In an elementary school classroom in Washington, D.C., students are taught to stand in a circle, hold hands, and "breathe in and breathe out" while "invoking thoughts of your ancestors."

V

While the invocation of a golden age can inspire and, to a degree, legitimize, it is doubtful whether any historical narrative—even one of one's own creation—can in fact empower. What it can do is provide a sensation of power when the genuine article is missing.

Afrocentrist and feminist historians have a mistaken notion of how social and cultural power—the sense of being central, significant, and influential—comes into being. They suffer from the same misperception about esteem as the critics of capitalism have about wealth: that it is a limited and fixed product existing "out there" and available to those presently without it only by seizure or redistribution. As feminist author Barbara Starrett writes, "The generation of power, alone, is impossible because power is always used. It always goes somewhere, does something. It cannot be destroyed. But it can be transformed." On the contrary, the ability to garner honor and esteem is a direct result of the creative energies of individuals. Social and cultural power flows from actions that, in one way or another, leave a mark on the world.

But Afrocentrists, radical feminists, and deep ecologists are not, in the final analysis, interested in leaving a mark on the world. They are interested, alternately, in appropriating the marks that other people have left on the world, and in positing an ancient, edenic time when conditions were such that there was no need to make a mark on the world. The impression one comes away with after reading the works of these various radical thinkers is that they imagine that rewriting the past alters reality, that conditions are actually improved simply by the telling of a new tale.

It is easy to forget that those who are spinning these tales were originally motivated by pressing issues: the educational status of inner-city black children, women's desire for professional advancement and personal dignity, the growing hazards posed to the environment. That these very real problems get lost in the utopian shuffle is, as the Marxists would say, no accident. It is much the easier route to reject liberal reformism, as each of these groups resolutely does: the radical feminists dismiss it as a hopelessly naive desire "for sexual egalitarianism from within a structure that is patriarchal"; the deep ecologists dismiss it as "ineradicably anthropocentric"; the Afrocentrists dismiss it as a manifestation of "self-hate." In each case, liberal reformist *action* is to be replaced by radical *theory*—a theory that will not only account for the interest group's current status within society, but will also offer a customized genesis myth.

It is as if, having realized how much real-world effort would be required to achieve social, economic, and political gains, the critics turn from laborious efforts at improvement to visions of a transformative revolution in consciousness.

This is an impulse that Shelby Steele has recently shed light on in his analysis of black culture, *The Content of Our Character.* The embrace of the term "Afro-American"—with what Steele calls its "invocation of the glories of a remote African past and its wistful suggestion of a homeland"—suggests to Steele "nothing so much as a despair over the possibility of gaining the less conspicuous pride that follows real advancement." Steele might be speaking of feminists as well as blacks when he says: "To avoid the shocks of doubt that come from entering the mainstream, or plunging more deeply into it, we often pull back at precisely those junctures where segregation once pulled us back. In this way we duplicate the conditions of our oppression and reenact our role as victims even in the midst of far greater freedom and far less victimization." In their flight from the realm of action—liberal reformism and bourgeois achievement—into the rarefied realm of theory, radical groups of all stripes attempt to shift attention away from questions of their own performance to grandiose demands that society as a whole—its very language, concepts, mores—undergo transformation.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

VI

There is, finally, a poignant undercurrent that runs through all these retellings of the past. In each instance—even in those most clearly concerned with power—the utopian vision betrays an acute homesickness. The language of "return" permeates these efforts at rescripting history. Loren Eiseley describes the feeling as a "suffer[ing] from a nostalgia for which there is no remedy upon earth[;] . . . what, increasingly, is required of man is that he pursue the paradox of return," that he struggle to regain "that world we have lost."

Deep ecology, explain Devall and Sessions, "can potentially satisfy our deepest yearnings." (Sartre, Heidegger, and Spinoza are favorite sources of the deep ecology movement, as is Buddhism, with its emphasis on the transcendence of dualities.) Primal peoples—even those persisting down to our current age—who are "dwelling in ecosystems, bonded to place, having communion with wild animals, and realizing that spirit and matter are not inherently separated, have experienced this deeper sense of place." What is so valuable about feminist theology, says Rosemary Radford Reuther, is "its radical return to original human possibilities lost at the dawn of history." Carolyn Merchant, professor of philosophy at Berkeley and a leading ecofeminist, adopts a similarly prelapsarian tone. "The World we have lost was organic," she announces at the opening of her influential book, *The Death of Nature*. "From the obscure origins of our species, human beings have lived in daily, immediate, organic relation with the natural order for their sustenance."

In ancient times, echoes Riane Eisler, "the world itself was one. . . . Our feet danced in sacred groves, honoring the spirits of nature. What was later broken asunder into prayer and music, ritual and dance, play and work, was originally one." For millennia every activity and chore was done in a sacred manner; "there was no splintering of culture and nature, spirituality, science, and technology." The rediscovery of this past "signals a way out of our alienation from one another and from nature." Theologian Carol Christ agrees: "We have lost the sense that this Earth is our true home." When we finally return to the goddess, Sjöö and Mor believe, "the universe will be our home again, as before. *This flight is not an escape, but a return.*"

One can sympathize with the emotional pain and spiritual longing that underlie these utopian outlooks without condoning the practice of using history as a palliative to soothe the pangs of alienation or to bestow a badly wanted sense of power and accomplishment. This is precisely the danger Nietzsche described when he spoke of people's fondness for "monumental history"—the worshipping of the past and the twisting of it to serve one's own ends. (It is a sorry time when one turns to Nietzsche for words of moderation.)

Today, social groups that are confronted with political, cultural, and economic challenges are embracing utopian visions in a vain effort to comfort themselves in the present moment. It will be interesting to see how long it will take them to realize that in expending their energies in doctoring the past—rather than concentrating their efforts on the future—they are ministering to the wrong patient. FT

When Lilacs Shake

Now, in April, when lilacs shake
in gusts of rain, the crown-like buds
Waving thick and green on sceptre tips,
I ask myself: What have we been,
We two curled tight in winter's dark?

And when lilacs fully unfurl themselves,
Their heart-shaped leaves,
Their fragrant towers, purple or white,
Then what will we be
And what can we do as recklessly?

Robert Schultz

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Rich, the Poor, and Reaganomics

Michael Novak

When we come to measure the success of a presidency, it matters a great deal whether the administration in question made life better or worse for the poor. A culture whose values spring from Judaism, Christianity, and a compassionate humanism cannot be satisfied unless the poor are well cared for. Those who are better off can pretty much take care of themselves. But most (not all) of the poor are too young or too old, too ill or too disabled, to care for themselves. In this regard, the two accusations most consistently directed against the administration of Ronald Reagan are: (1) that it hurt the poor (and the middle class) and (2) that it increased the gap between the rich and the poor. Getting at the validity of these propositions requires careful and disinterested analysis.

Such analysis is not easily come by. In the religious communities, as elsewhere, almost nobody was entirely nonpartisan about Reagan and his policies. Yet it is perhaps not too old-fashioned to think that religious thinkers should be devoted to telling the truth. Moreover, what happens to the poor among us is a matter of great moral moment, and our reflections about alternative policies should be informed by careful attention to the facts. Admittedly, it is not easy to get at the truth, especially since most journalism, on which we depend for our sense of what is going on, is both intellectually weakest and most partisan in reporting economic questions. It is best, therefore, to go directly to primary sources, in this case the neutral annual report of the Census Bureau, *Money, Income and Poverty Status in the United States, 1988* (Series P-60, No. 166).

This record shows, in sum, that the Reagan administration did far better for the poor than did the Carter administration. In particular, the economic achievements of black Americans reached all-time highs. Yet this is not the record most people have heard of through the media.

For eight long years the nation's cultural elites did everything in their power to persuade the general public to think as ill of Ronald Reagan as they did. They predicted eight recessions to the one that actually occurred. They spoke with derision of "Reaganomics," until the so-called "misery index" invoked by Jimmy Carter—which stood as Carter left office at a postwar high—was brought down far more authoritatively (and quickly) than anyone had expected. At that point, as Reagan wryly noted, the media stopped speaking of "Reaganomics." And when the media began perceiving good economic news—about the growing millions of employed persons and the longest peacetime expansion in American history—their reporting of it typically came surrounded with as many fragments of bad news as they could find. The Reagan era by no means brought economic utopia, but in between the malaise of the Carter era and the malaise of the Bush era, it achieved a great deal for the poor.

Three years of double-digit inflation under Jimmy Carter had wreaked havoc on the poor. Those bad years cumulatively depleted nearly 40 percent of the value of all incomes. During Carter's single term, the poverty level for a nonfarm family of four soared from $5,815 to $8,414, and thus some 4.3 million persons (those on fixed incomes) were pulled down into poverty.

The basic facts of the Reagan years are now a matter of historical record. The Harvard economist Lawrence Lindsey expected to show that the growth achieved by Reaganomics decreased the taxes of the rich and hurt the poor, but found that the facts were exactly the reverse, as he reports in *The Growth Experiment* (1988). And later figures than his, the figures for 1988, can now be matched against the figures for 1980, Carter's last year. One can measure exactly how much Ronald Reagan achieved for the poor and

MICHAEL NOVAK *is the George Frederick Jewett Scholar in Religion and Public Policy at the American Enterprise Institute and a member of the Editorial Board of* FIRST THINGS.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

what an enormous increase in taxes he exacted from the rich, even while lowering tax rates across the board.

Reagan exempted virtually all the poor from federal income taxes, in part by almost doubling personal exemptions. Thus, a household earning less than $14,000 was by 1986 highly unlikely to be paying any federal income tax at all. (The effect of this was weakened by the steep increases in Social Security Taxes [FICA] mandated during the Carter years.) The Tax Reform Act of 1986 continued the reform process, expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit to the point where households with dependents in effect now pay *no federal taxes* up to nearly $10,000, and only a fraction of the *combined* employer/employee contribution to FICA up to nearly $20,000.

In 1976, Carter had attacked President Ford for a "misery index" much lower than his own policies were to cause by 1980. Carter ended up with interest rates at 19 percent, inflation at 13.5 percent, and unemployment at over 7 percent—a total of 40. By the end of his term, Reagan lowered this total to 17: interest rates 8 percent, unemployment 5.2 percent, inflation less than 4 percent. (In the narrow sense, the misery index counts only the inflation plus unemployment rates: a total of 20 for Carter, 9 for Reagan.)

All this was very good for the poor—not only the drop in inflation (which under Carter had driven so many people into poverty), but also the rise in employment and income. For example, the number of blacks employed when Carter left office was 9 million; during Reagan's eight years, this number shot up to 11.4 million. A higher proportion of black adults was then employed than at any time in history.

Partly for this reason, the total income received by the 27 million American blacks, which in 1980 was $191 billion (in constant 1988 dollars), soared in 1988 to $259 billion. This sum is larger than the GNP of nearly all of black Africa and, indeed, of all but ten nations in the world.

By 1988, half of all married-couple black families had an income above $30,424, the highest median income ever achieved by black families. The number of black families earning more than $50,000 (in constant 1988 dollars) jumped from 392,000 to 936,000 during Reagan's eight years.

All this good news for blacks has to be matched, however, against a continuing serious problem caused by cumulative personal choices. The number of single-parent families among blacks, which had been rising with great rapidity since the 1960s, grew more slowly, but still significantly, from 1.9 million in 1980 to 2.2 million in 1988. More than half of all black children were by then the financial and psychological burden of one parent. Most of these single parents were female and the vast majority were not in the work force. Such families, therefore, were hardly able to benefit by economic growth, since they were disconnected from employment.

Indeed, the rapid growth in the number of female-headed households during the past thirty years dramatically altered the shape of poverty (not only in the U.S., but in virtually every welfare-state economy). Fifty years ago, a high proportion of the poor lived in married-couple families, so that higher employment levels and decent wages—economic growth—could eliminate most poverty. In that context, President John F. Kennedy could credibly say that "a rising tide lifts all boats." The new shape of poverty has falsified this belief. Female heads of household who are neither employed nor in the work force—and who perhaps, with young children to care for, shouldn't be expected to be—no longer rise with rising tides. They depend almost entirely on welfare. Such families, especially in urban areas and when the women are quite young, may also live in considerable isolation from the rest of society except for their children, their boy friends, and the television set. Such poverty is not easy to cure by government programs. Indeed, expanding government programs, if they do not cause this phenomenon, are at least coincident with its growth.

Because of the success of Reaganomics in generating an unprecedented number of months of uninterrupted economic growth, the media began to turn attention away from the absolute condition of the poor and towards a second issue: inequality. The Census Bureau divides the 92 million U.S. households into five equal segments ("quintiles"), ranked by annual reported income, and the media began to stress the fact that the *proportion* of income earned by the bottom 20 percent declined during Reagan's two terms. Most journalists overlooked the more important reality that the *total income* of the bottom quintile (in constant dollars) rose substantially between 1980 and 1988, by nearly 15 percent.

Since noncash income from welfare benefits isn't even counted in Census Bureau figures, the income of the bottom quintile cannot be raised by higher welfare benefits, except those in cash. And if all welfare were given in cash, the cost of bringing every single person above the poverty line would be a mere $35 billion, one-third of the present total federal expenditure for means-tested programs. Three times more money is now allotted in benefits than in cash.

The 18 million householders in the bottom 20 percent no longer have the same characteristics as those who were in the same quintile sixty years ago. In 1930, most householders in the bottom quintile presided over married-couple families. In 1988 more than half (52 percent) were single persons. One-third of all such householders in 1988 were widows and one-third were single mothers with small children. So it is not surprising that nearly two-thirds of the householders in the bottom quintile did not work at all, and that only 12 percent worked full-time for at least 48 weeks. After all, some 40 percent were older than sixty-five. Thus, most of these householders were either

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

living in retirement or else were unemployed single females with small children. In 1988, only one-fifth of the whole quintile lived as married-couple families (often with grown children).

Nonetheless, nearly one-third of those in the bottom quintile were above the poverty line. The cutoff point defining the bottom fifth was $15,102 in 1988, well above the poverty line ($12,385) for a family of four. Over half of the householders at the bottom were living alone, and for such persons the poverty line was much lower. Indeed, it was possible for one person (or couple) to have an income nearly twice as high as the poverty line and still be in the bottom 20 percent.

In sum, the bottom fifth did better in 1988 than it had in 1980. And so did every other quintile. In fact, practically all brackets of Americans moved up the income ladder between 1980 and 1988.

In one of its measurements, the Census Bureau divides households by fixed (real) dollar amounts into nine brackets. According to this method, the percentage of American households reporting an income of $15,000 or less dropped between 1980 and 1988 from 28.8 to 27.3 percent. The percentage of households reporting in the next two brackets, between $15,000 and $49,999, decreased by more: from 55 percent to just under 52 percent. These figures indicate that households at the lower end were moving upwards. And indeed, the percentage of those earning from $50,000 to $74,999 jumped from 11.3 to 13.4, while the percentage of those in the next bracket, $75,000 to $99,999, also jumped (from 2.9 to 4.2) and the percentage of those earning more than $100,000 actually doubled, from 1.6 to 3.2. In sum, from 1980 to 1988, lower brackets were shrinking, upper ones expanding; Americans were moving up. Indeed, if you want a pocketbook reason for President Reagan's popularity, recall that the number of American households reporting an income of $50,000 or more (in constant 1988 dollars) grew by 6.3 million between 1980 and 1988, and the percentage of working-age Americans holding jobs (63.4 in July 1988) reached an all-time high.

Since these achievements cannot be erased from the neutral Census Bureau reports, those who despised Reagan and what he stood for had two choices: either grudgingly to admit that he did far better than they had predicted, or to change the terms of measurement. As a result, critics stopped insisting that the poor fared worse under Reagan than under Carter. They began stressing instead the growing "gap" between the top quintile and the bottom quintile. Even here, if they were honest, they were obliged to notice as causes of the phenomenon profound social changes far beyond the reach of government.

For one thing, the Reagan tax cuts had little to do with the "gap"; the Census Bureau figures defining quintiles of income are pre-tax. More importantly, the demographic profiles of householders in the top and bottom quintiles have diverged increasingly in recent decades. Thus, only 22 percent of the householders in the bottom quintile are married, compared to 82 percent in the top quintile. At the bottom, 52 percent are single-person households, at the top only 5 percent. Put differently, at the bottom, 52 percent are living alone; at the top, 83 percent have at least two persons under one roof, and two-thirds have three or more. At the bottom, 40 percent are 65 or older, at the top 8 percent. At the bottom, only 12 percent worked full time, year round; at the top, 93 percent. Moreover, at the bottom, nearly two-thirds of households have no one working at all, whereas 83 percent of the households at the top have two to four persons bringing in income. Given these divergent characteristics (all of which affect income) is it any wonder that the top quintile has considerably more income than the bottom quintile? It could hardly be otherwise.

Then there is the factor of education. Two-thirds of the householders in the top quintile have some college education and nearly one-half have four years or more. By contrast, in that portion of the bottom quintile that falls below the poverty line, only 9 percent had completed high school and only 4 percent had as much as a year or more of college. In the top quintile, most spouses are also working full-time (this means, in most cases, at least two high incomes), but in the bottom quintile very few households have even one person working full-time. So long as the nation is committed to higher education for both sexes and to employment outside the home for both (if they so choose) high-income householders whose spouses are as educationally advantaged as themselves are bound to put ever more distance between themselves and the bottom quintile. The much-lamented "gap" is thus an inevitable product of the nation's commitment to both higher education and employment for both sexes.

It is also sometimes alleged that the Reagan administration "cut" welfare benefits for the poor. The President claimed strenuously that he was cutting only the "rate of growth" of such expenditures. What is the truth? According to the *Statistical Abstract: 1990*, the actual expenditures in 1980 and 1987 (latest available) look like this:

U.S. Expenditures for Means-Tested Welfare Programs (Current Dollars, in millions)

	1980	1987
Public Aid	$48,666	$69,233
Medicaid	14,550	27,613
Food Stamps	9,083	12,362
Education	13,452	16,054
Housing	6,608	11,110
Other Social Welfare	8,786	8,504

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

These numbers are given in current dollars for each year, in order to reflect the political realities of the time. If they were corrected for inflation during the eight Reagan years, most would still show greater cumulative real spending for welfare. It is true that some programs, such as "other social welfare" (including child nutrition, child welfare, ACTION, etc.) did decline.

Much has also been written—falsely—about the tax cuts by which Reagan supposedly favored the rich. It is true that Reagan championed tax cuts, much to the dismay of the policy elite, both Democratic and establishment Republican. (I have always thought of establishment Republicans as representing the GOP School of Dentistry—they don't seem to think a policy is good for you unless it hurts. If Democrats are "tax and spend," establishment Republicans are "tax and reduce the deficit.") Given cuts in tax rates, Reagan promised economic growth and a higher tax intake from the rich. He said tax cuts would provide incentives that would stimulate economic activity, producing higher tax revenues. He was right. Late in 1990, the Swedish Parliament openly recognized this by lowering the top Swedish tax rate from 72 percent to 51 percent, and the Swedish minister for tax policy declared: "What was achieved in tax reform in the U.S. played a big part in our Swedish debate."

In reporting on the Reagan tax cuts, however, most U.S. journalists failed to observe the simple distinction between tax rates and tax revenues. Reagan did cut tax rates, not solely for the rich but across the board. But he also extracted a great deal more revenue from the rich than anyone ever had, both absolutely and as a proportion of all taxes paid.

For example, in 1988, an income of just over $50,000 placed a household in the top 20 percent of taxpayers, and an income of almost $86,000 qualified a household for the top 5 percent. By these standards, many full professors, if their spouses also work, qualify as rich. In fact, so do most journalists and other activists who regularly attack the rich without recognizing in this a self-accusation. In any case, the top 5 percent of all taxpayers paid 35 percent of all federal income taxes in 1981, but 46 percent in 1988. By contrast, the share of federal income taxes paid by the rest of the top half of taxpayers (from 50-95 percent) declined from 57 percent to 49 percent. And the share paid by the entire bottom 50 percent of the taxpayers fell from 7.4 percent to 5.7 percent. In other words, Reagan shifted the tax burden significantly from the poor and the middle class to the rich. It bears repeating: He soaked the rich.

In comparing these facts to the more commonly heard accounts of the Reagan era, it may help to note that those who deride Reagan usually rely on two tricks. The most important of these is to report figures starting from 1979, instead of 1981. In this way, they bring into the picture the last two extremely damaging Carter years, with their withering inflation. They thus lay on Reagan blame for the devastation Carter wrought. The other trick is the usual one of not allowing conservatives to play on the same level playing field as liberals; when they lose on an issue, they change the subject and never admit defeat.

There is much in the Reagan years for a fair-minded observer both to celebrate and to fault. One should raise serious questions about the federal deficit, the deregulation of the Savings and Loans, and the restructuring of industry through buyouts and takeovers. On these issues, one should hear out both the prosecution and the defense and form a judgment. But on the issue whether the poor benefited more under Reagan or under Carter, and whether the rich paid a larger share of federal income taxes under Reagan or Carter, a fair-minded judgment is also called for, and this one is clearly in Reagan's favor.

The American people may come to appreciate Reagan's achievement even more than they did in the elections of 1984 and 1988, now that the establishment Republican leaders—George Bush, Richard Darman, and Nicholas Brady—have abandoned Reagan's policies of growth through incentives. For all its faults, the dynamism of the Reagan era looks pretty good framed between two periods of malaise. Alas, the poor suffer most from the current administration's turning away from that dynamism. FT

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Books In Review

A Modern Jeremiad

THE TRUE AND ONLY HEAVEN: PROGRESS AND ITS CRITICS. By CHRISTOPHER LASCH. *W. W. Norton. 576 pp. $25.*

Reviewed by **Jean Bethke Elshtain**

CHRISTOPHER LASCH has written a "loose, baggy monster" of a book. He takes on nothing less than "the western human condition," arguing determinedly and, to my mind, persuasively that the idea of progress has outgrown its time. Lasch even suggests that progress, as the West has encoded it, has more than had its day and there is no due owed it. None at all. Because our political ideologies, left and right, have revolved around the notion of progress like so many moths drawn ineluctably to the flame, they "have exhausted their capacity either to explain events or to inspire men and women to constructive action." That's his thesis, more or less, and despite considerable meandering through a smorgasbord of thinkers, movements, events, and philosophies, most home-grown and more than a few half-baked, he sustains it or, better put, continually returns to it as his touchstone.

In addition to being unhappy with our continued seduction by progress, Lasch is similarly put off by alternatives or, he would say, pseudo-alternatives to its depredations. His story, then, goes like this. In the eighteenth century, the founders of modern liberalism embraced an argument that posited human wants and needs as infinitely expandable. It followed that "an indefinite expansion of the productive forces" of economic life was needed in order to satisfy and continuously fuel this restless and relentless cycle of needs-creation. This ideology of progress was distinctive, Lasch claims, in exempting the world "from the judgment of time," leading to an unqualified and, for Lasch, altogether unwarranted confidence that an essentially unlimited way of life could persist undiminished, undamaged, and without generating terrible pressures.

The joint property of various liberalisms and conservatisms since its historic birth, progressivism as ideology has primarily been carried in this century by those on the left—including New Dealers—who valorized a political philosophy of consumerism. Moving from a glorification of producer to consumer was key because, following the nineteenth-century English thinker J. A. Hobson, the conclusion was reached that underconsumption leads to declining investment. No real alternative to laissez-faire celebrations of the untrammeled operations of the market, then, can be found in most left-wing ideologies: both left and right are wedded to the culture of productivity and consumption and both have made their own sordid pact with the demons that threaten to destroy us. These demons, for Lasch, are the vast gaudy, leering manifestations of a democratized consumerism that has come, more and more, to bear "almost the entire weight of our hopes, aspirations, and fears."

PROMOTING A brittle present-mindedness, the idea of progress weakens "the inclination to make intelligent provision for the future, and nostalgia, its ideological twin, undermines the ability to make intelligent use of the past." Distinguishing carefully between nostalgia and an appropriately critical historic memory, Lasch laments the ways in which—driven by progress, even driven a bit mad by it—we can do no better than issue a "communitarian counterpoint" to attempt to right the balance and to retain, at least here and there, smidgens of civic virtue. But the game is well nigh lost. Here Lasch would have strengthened his argument had he specified more tightly those arenas within which virtue gets relocated—domesticity, even the self-sacrifice of war. But these can in any case scarcely restore those genuine habits of self-discipline, loyalty, and recognition of limits that progress has nearly obliterated.

Progress has eaten away corrosively at all the frameworks that helped to give coherent form, meaning, and purpose to human existence. The "collapse of legitimate authority," for example, is one depressing sign of the times. We are no longer able to distinguish dominance and crude "power-over" from authority and this, in turn, leads to cynicism and an explosive politics of resentment. It may seem to be stretching the point to blame progress for all of this, but bear in mind that progress, for Lasch, is that entire cluster of nostrums and notions that forged a celebration of "more" as "better" and "getting" as "good." Human rights, particularly in the United States, no longer signify "Stop" to the depredations of government so much as "Gimme" to the entitlements that government, construed instrumentally, is expected to proffer.

With the collapse of limits and of legitimate authority, decency gives way. Our way of life has become, Lasch suggests, pervasively unwholesome. We are addicted to and obsessed with "sex, violence, and the pornography of 'making it.'" Drugs, "entertainment," impatience with any restraints, celebration of "non-binding" commitments (which means, in practice, no commitments at all): these and more are the detritus of progress. That and our "third-rate educational system, our third-rate morality, our refusal to draw a distinction between right and wrong lest we 'impose' our morality on others and thus invite others to 'impose' their morality on

JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN *is Centennial Professor of Political Science and Professor of Philosophy at Vanderbilt University. She is the author, most recently, of* Power Trips and Other Journeys *(University of Wisconsin Press).*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

us, our reluctance to judge or be judged, our indifference to the needs of future generations as evidenced by our willingness to saddle them with a huge national debt, an overgrown arsenal of destruction, and a deteriorating environment; our inhospitable attitude to the newcomers born in our midst, our unstated assumption which underlies so much of the propaganda for unlimited abortion that only those children born for success ought to be allowed to be born at all." In Lasch's hands, the jeremiad is reborn.

The exhaustion of the progressive tradition, in both its right- and left-wing manifestations, betrays itself, Lasch concludes, "in its inability to confront these fundamental questions of modern politics or the equally urgent question of how the living standards of the rich can be extended to the poor on a global scale without putting an unbearable burden on the earth's natural resources." Progressive ideologies are now little more than wistful and brittle soporifics which, in denying limits or the tragic sense of life, fail to articulate any possibility of genuine political hope. Lasch is especially devastating in his critique of radical chic and other forms of decadent leftism that freely condemn "ways of life of which they know little and to which they feel nothing but contempt from their safe perch."

Can anything be salvaged from this wreckage? Lasch says there can, but he doesn't really show us how and where we can find ideas, habits, rituals, and ways of being to recuperate—at least not in any sustained way. He speaks of alternatives but then seems to explode rather systematically the language currently available to speak of those alternatives, including the concept of community. Tying that concept to the by-now outmoded and pointless discourse of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft, Lasch thinks it is too anemic, too sentimental a term.

But I wonder if we must, or can, abandon it altogether. "Community" remains one of the key categories people use to talk about themselves, and whatever depredations may have been visited on the word in intellectual and pseudo-intellectual discourse, it is still a concept through which ordinary people express their aspirations, their hopes, and their fears. On this matter and others, one wants Lasch to say more.

But perhaps he holds back out of fear of offering false and illusory hopes. The habit of mind he endorses he calls "moral realism." He describes this way of thinking as "the understanding that everything has its price," and he celebrates its respect for limits, its skepticism about progress. He specifies this moral realism as central to the identity of his unlikely heroes, the morally conservative petite bourgeoisie who exemplify a rough-and-ready egalitarianism, a respect for workmanship, and a sense of loyalty. "Whatever can be said against them," Lasch argues, "small proprietors, artisans, tradesmen, and farmers—more often victims of 'improvement' than beneficiaries—are unlikely to mistake the promised land of progress for the true and only heaven."

A sense of limits is the sensibility that pervades this book, and it is a sensibility Lasch seeks to recall and to reinstate for our time. We need to tell an alternative story of America, he would argue, one that moves away from the narrative of progress of the dominant Protestant culture without descending into those blithe and wholly abstract celebrations of "difference" with which we are currently inundated. Lasch seeks not programs but principles; not nostrums but necessity; not causes but character; not rallies but reverence. The world, he says, was "not made solely for human enjoyment"—a genuinely radical proposition in our comfort-seeking time.

A tough-minded Augustinianism pervades this book. Lasch accepts the reality of human limits and of sin, and he sees in the unadorned and giddily optimistic story of progress the ever more destructive outcroppings of Pelagianism run amuck.

Do You Believe What You Sing?

Why Catholics Can't Sing: The Culture of Catholicism and the Triumph of Bad Taste. By Thomas Day. *Crossroad. 177 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by **Paul V. Mankowski**

In a moment of exasperation, the novelist Flannery O'Connor wrote to a friend that the motto of the Catholic Church could be: We Guarantee to Corrupt Nothing But Your Taste. O'Connor's remark was penned before the impact of the Second Vatican Council was felt by American Catholics, and anyone alert to the pre-conciliar situation can call up memories of liturgical oafishness that are as painful as biting on a bad tooth. Reform was needed; yet, after twenty-five years at the mercy of the reformers—years that have seen the Mass bent, folded, stapled, and mutilated by any number of liturgical Roundheads—we are entitled to ask whether the demon of bad taste driven out by our would-be healers has not returned with seven devils more wicked than himself to reinfect the host.

While his approach to the problem is by way of liturgical music, the terrain he knows best, many of Thomas Day's penetrating observations are applicable to the predicament of Catholic ritual considered as a whole. Day is a professional musician with a Ph.D. in musicology from Columbia University, and those of us who are musically naive but have been victims of those he calls the "yodeling sadists up in the choir loft" will take deep gratification in finding our instinctive revulsions clarified (and frequently vindicated) by his deft scholarship.

Paul V. Mankowski, S.J., *is a frequent contributor to* First Things.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The musical defects that Day holds up for scrutiny point to more than a "triumph of bad taste"; they find their birth and their stubborn longevity in convictions about ecclesiology and doctrine that are too often unexamined. The real value of this book—in addition to the macabre delight it gives Catholics in watching their liturgical tormentors so adroitly dismembered—lies precisely in the fact that it makes these covertly held commitments a matter of public discussion.

Day's essay is part historical, part descriptive, part critical. He traces the American Catholic taste for unsingable schmaltz as if it were a gene for a birth defect, finding its origin in the constraints imposed on Catholics in Ireland, whence it was borne by immigrants to the New World and institutionalized with the Irish clerical ascendancy: an ingenious and plausible thesis, but one which remains for other historians to verify. Particularly noteworthy is his brilliant demonstration that the treacly sentimentalism of Irish-American music—in popular songs as well as hymns—was not repudiated but *continued*, seamlessly, by the liturgical "folk music" of the 1970s and later.

This book is most trenchant, however, in detailing the ironies of the liturgical movement. Very often, changes in ritual practice have created effects precisely opposite to those in virtue of which they were justified. "Very little is being done to understand the reasons for this awkward situation," says Day, yet "most of the people-in-charge and the experts still go on at great length about the beauties of the emperor's new clothes." Within the guild at any rate, the gush of exhortation and (self-) congratulation runs on unabated.

THE ISOLATED sacerdotalism of the older rite, for example, was to give way to greater involvement of the entire congregation in the liturgical action. Day argues that, on the contrary, the "presider" has come to monopolize the Mass to an extent inconceivable in times past, and with this difference: that the monopoly is effected not *qua* priest but *qua* personality. In a chapter titled "You're Lookin' Great, Narcissus," he points to the celebrant's banal greeting at the beginning of the Eucharist:

> "Good morning" really means, "*I* wish *you* a good morning. *I* [the person, the individual called Father Hank, Father Chuck, Father Bob] deign to wish *you* a pleasant continuation of the morning. *I*, the center of your attention and probably the reason you have come, *I*, the one and only *me*, welcome you to *my* show and it will be a good show with a good performance by *me*, and for this reason you will be fortunate to have a good morning."

A second irony might be called The Despotism of the Extreme Democrat. Tom Wolfe showed us some years ago how the masters of Bauhaus worker-housing chic used every form of tyranny at their disposal to frustrate the desires of real proletarians, who wished to add a little warmth and humanity to the concrete slab pillboxes built for them by their self-appointed caretakers. In the same way, simple Catholics uneasy with the clown mass or the offertory dance troupe have met a wall of unshakable resolve: there simply is no turning back [say the "enforcers"]; it is for *us*, the university trained, the licensed and commissioned, to judge the beauty of the emperor's wardrobe; no others need apply. Contemporary ritualists are famously intolerant; in Catholic seminaries it is common to refer to priests who have "a black-belt in liturgy." Yet all this, it need hardly be said, takes place in the name of a counter-hierarchical program.

Day also contends that some of the liturgical innovations purported to *renew* the Church, once their theological credentials are examined, will be found to have the effect of *replacing* the Church. He connects the "Voice of God" song (his term for an alarmingly common practice wherein the congregation arrogates the first-person voice of God to itself) with the thesis of Thomas Sheehan that Jesus came to destroy the notion of God-in-Himself:

> The current disarray in Christianity is, Sheehan suggests, a hopeful sign that the false ecclesiastical institution called the church is crumbling and will be replaced with the Kingdom that Jesus actually promised—and the doctrine of the kingdom meant "that henceforth and forever God was present only in and as one's neighbor."
>
> A visit to any parish where the reformed-folk repertory dominates and where the "Voice of God" song is a great favorite will provide enough evidence to suggest that the beginnings of Sheehan's kingdom may have already come.

This is a very serious charge, and deserves to be taken seriously—by the public theological academy.

DAY CITES A number of other examples of grave malfeasance, yet leaves them in half-shadow, undeveloped. He points to a transparent conflict of interest wherein the publisher of a scholarly book celebrating contemporary music is also the "world's major publisher of music in the folk/'contemporary' manner." He claims that a recent study of Catholic parish life commissioned by the University of Notre Dame uncovered several failures on the part of the promoters of the new ritual, but that "some of the warts are edited out" of the book version of this study. If this is the case (and it should be investigated impartially) it should not be disguised. Finally, Day makes reference to the gunshot suicides of two prominent liturgists, deaths which he says were "not mentioned

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in most of the Catholic press." He asks whether these liturgists were "finally pushed over the edge not by personal difficulties but by the realization that their academic liturgical 'vision' was a failure." We are far beyond questions of culturally induced "bad taste" here. Is this book *really* about why Catholics can't sing?

"*Timeo Peritos*," said Cardinal Heenan during the Second Vatican Council, "*et dona ferentes*": I fear the experts even when they bear gifts. Notwithstanding his mordant wit and many felicities of expression, Day has given us excellent reason to wonder whether we feel too little concern at the antics of the professionals, whether the late Cardinal knew more than he was letting on. A sobering thought; a sobering book.

Beyond Liberty

THIS HEMISPHERE OF LIBERTY: A PHILOSOPHY OF THE AMERICAS. By MICHAEL NOVAK. *AEI Press. 153 pp. $18.95.*

Reviewed by **Dean C. Curry**

WE ARE NEARLY TWO years into the post-Cold War era—an era as yet without a name—and we have awakened to the sobering reality that democracy is easier to desire than it is to sustain. The painful experiences of nations as disparate as Czechoslovakia, Nicaragua, South Africa, and the Philippines attest to this fact. Each of these nations, as well as others, has rejected their past tyranny in favor of building a society based on the principles of liberty. In each case, the pattern of democracy they have chosen reflects some variation of a now-existent Western liberal democratic form.

That this is the case should be gratifying to the Western liberal democracies who, for half a century, stood firm against the manifold onslaughts of those who sought to snuff out the flame of liberty. Indeed, in the world-historical struggle for the hearts and minds of humanity, the good guys won: the democratic idea triumphed. But history isn't over yet. For although this moment in time has witnessed the triumph of the democratic *idea*, the realization of liberty—that is, the building of working, stable institutions of liberty—is proving a formidable endeavor.

It is to this problem of translating the idea of democracy into a functioning reality that Michael Novak turns his attention in his most recent book, *This Hemisphere of Liberty: A Philosophy of the Americas.* The title is something of a misnomer, since the author's argument only occasionally nods in specific reference to the political economy of Latin America. To be sure, the argument that Novak makes is relevant to the Americas south of the Rio Grande, but it is equally relevant to the experiences of all other nations, including those in Eastern Europe, presently engaged in the task of building institutions of liberty.

To those acquainted with Michael Novak's considerable contribution to the development of a theory of democratic capitalism, much of this book will be familiar. Here, for example, Novak reformulates his arguments about the necessary relationship between democracy and capitalism (and vice versa), as well as his location of the cause of the wealth of nations in the creative, inventive, and entrepreneurial spirit of the human mind. The trinitarian nature of liberty—political, economic, and moral-cultural—is also discussed anew. But this slim volume is more than a condensed version of Novak's 1982 classic, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism.* In the present book, Novak makes the case that democracy is the destiny of "this hemisphere of liberty" and beyond.

The Latin American connection of *This Hemisphere of Liberty* is located in the genesis of the book itself, which originated as a series of lectures given in Latin America over the course of the past few years. While recognizing "the unique and distinctive complex of mental tendencies that speaks to the Latin American condition," Novak focuses his case for the universal destiny of liberty in what he has coined "the Catholic Whig tradition."

The Catholic Whig tradition stretches back to the first Whig (Lord Acton's characterization), Thomas Aquinas, and includes, more recently, the theological and philosophical heritage of Alexis de Tocqueville and Jacques Maritain. This tradition has been nourished by secular influences as well, most notably by the Scottish Enlightenment writings of David Hume and Adam Smith.

NOVAK ACKNOWLEDGES that there are other traditions of liberty. For example, there is the left-leaning "progressive" tradition that locates human dignity and progress as its central affirmations. And there is the right-leaning "conservative" or, as it is presently known, "paleoconservative" tradition, a tradition that values the past for its innocence, dependence on custom, and awareness of the limits of human striving. The Catholic Whigs are uncomfortable with both, rejecting, *inter alia*, the former's dangerous utopianism and the latter's naive embrace of the past. At the same time, writes Novak, the Catholic Whigs "believe that it is the human vocation to construct—patiently and slowly—better institutions for the future. . . . In short, the Whigs are the party of liberty, tradition, and progress." That is, tradition and progress "rightly understood."

For the Catholic Whig, the right understanding of tradition and progress is rooted in four principles. The first principle, ordered liberty, stands in stark contrast to the contemporary notion of unfettered liberty that finds its basis in the putatively absolute nature of

DEAN C. CURRY *teaches at Messiah College in Grantham, PA, and is the author of* A World Without Tyranny: Christian Faith and International Politics.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

individual "rights." Ordered liberty, by contrast, is "achieved through self-mastery that nourishes reflection and choice . . . [and] is won by slowly gaining dominion over appetite, passion, ignorance, and whim." In other words, ordered liberty is liberty with purpose, and that purpose is to produce virtuous citizens and a virtuous society.

The second and third principles of the Catholic Whig tradition, the person and community, are integrally related. Novak argues that the present task of the Catholic Whig tradition is to "form a new synthesis of philosophical conceptions and practical institutions that do justice, together, to private rights and public happiness." The Catholic Whig finds the choice between the common good and the individual a false one. In reality, Novak notes, "the ancient debate between the person and the community [has] been changed by the American experience." The American *novus ordo*, with its revolutionary form of social life—the voluntary association—demonstrates that ordered liberty and human rights are products of social arrangements that give primacy to both persons *and* communities. Each, Novak points out, "is necessary for the other's definition—and for the other's flourishing."

Essential to the three previous principles, and indeed to Novak's entire argument, is the role of morality. Novak discusses morality as the fourth principle of the Catholic Whig tradition, implying a coequality among principles. In fact, however, morality is the foundational principle to the others. Novak's discussion of morality is the most sustained and significant theme of his book, and it is, I believe, the most relevant to the democratic project presently underway around the globe.

TO DATE, MOST of the energies of newly democratizing societies have focused on the construction of the institutions of political and economic liberty—freely elected parliaments, free markets, etc. This is both understandable and legitimate. What is missing in these efforts, however, is attention to the vastly more problematic moral-cultural component of democracy. As Novak reminds us, a new political and economic order of liberty "demands a new set of moral virtues." All the courage in the world coupled with all the political and economic wisdom in the world can not build a stable, functioning democratic capitalist society. The heart of the democratic revolution, Novak repeatedly points out, "is moral or it is not at all."

Recent events in Eastern Europe and elsewhere provide compelling evidence that the secular political and economic "salvation myths" of the twentieth-century tyrannies are unable to address what Novak calls the "possibilities of our moral lives." What the peoples of these former tyrannies understand is that economic and political liberty permits the cultivation of those virtues that allow men and women to achieve the possibilities of their moral lives.

Herein lies the challenge of the present historical moment. The failures and vast human costs of modern "salvation myths" are now well known, as is the capacity of democratic capitalism to raise up the poor, protect human rights, and allow for unprecedented freedom of thought and action. However, the moral prerequisites and purposes of democratic capitalism are rarely articulated, and are frequently ignored, even by the religious leaders of free societies. This is tragic. For democratic government cannot endure apart from a common understanding that liberty is not an end in itself, but a means toward the fulfillment of humanity's deepest quest for personal and communal meaning.

Near the end of *This Hemisphere of Liberty*, Michael Novak calls for a moral awakening to quench the spiritual thirst that underlies the present global democratic revolution. "Spiritual thirst" is an apt metaphor: What we are witnessing around the world is not just a yearning for freedom, but, more fundamentally, a search for a canopy of meaning that will satisfy mankind's most basic spiritual instincts. The most profound contribution of the Catholic Whig tradition to democratic theory lies in this recognition that man does not live by bread alone.

The Inscrutable Sinologists

CHINA MISPERCEIVED: AMERICAN ILLUSIONS AND CHINESE REALITY. By STEVEN W. MOSHER. *Basic Books. 260 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by **James Finn**

DRIVEN BY the Tiananmen massacre of June 4, 1989, foreign perceptions of China are now being reexamined in a manner reminiscent of earlier foreign perceptions of the Soviet Union.

In the early 1930s, millions of people died of famine in the Ukraine and North Caucasus. Walter Duranty, the *New York Times* correspondent who traveled widely through that area at the height of the famine, received prizes and high honor for filing stories that deliberately denied that reality. He had observed not starvation but well-fed peasants, he reported. Scattered evidence for that planned famine was available to Western observers—indeed, Malcolm Muggeridge reported his eye-witness account at the time—but a Gresham's law of journalism operated, false coinage driving out the good. It took decades before the truth was widely reported and assimilated in the West, and then only after it was certified by Soviet authorities.

This and related misconceptions of the Soviet Union—the discovery of the New Man, the closing of the gap between rich and poor, the enthusiastic, voluntary submission of the individual to the collective

JAMES FINN *is Editorial Director of Freedom House and editor of* Freedom Review, *its bimonthly magazine.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

effort, the eradication of greed and crime—should have provided a cautionary tale for those who reported on China after the Communist triumph in 1949, and especially for Americans who were finally admitted to China after the Nixon breakthrough in 1972.

Alas, instead of being cautioned, a vast array of visitors provided another cautionary tale, with Chinese rather than Soviet features. *China Misperceived* is Steven W. Mosher's account and analysis of the perceptions and misperceptions people have had about China, particularly in recent times. American attitudes, while not exactly pendulum swings, did oscillate between attraction and repulsion during different periods of U.S.-China relations.

President Nixon's trip to China came after the Great Leap Forward of the late 1950s and Cultural Revolution of the late 1960s. Both of these movements inflicted grievous harm on China and its citizens. These were years of starvation and abuse for millions of Chinese, and the prisons were full of victims, many of them tortured, during the time of the presidential visit and for years after. They were part of the New China, but not a part displayed to visitors. Some of the most dramatic, sometimes amusing accounts of the New China that the visitors did see began with the president and the contingent of journalists that accompanied him on his week-long visit. The imaginative reports continued with an influx of visitors that included additional journalists, church people, businessmen, political figures, entertainers, and academics. Although distinctions between the individual commentators are in order, Mosher provides enough examples of their reactions to show that many of them discovered what they had expected to find in the New China. Some samples suggest the tenor of their comments.

"Everything in China has changed except the endlessly resilient, hard-working, and clever Chinese people. The quality of life has changed, vastly for the worse for the ancient ruling class but for the better for everyone else." *Joseph Alsop*

"By assuming the role of China's Dr. Spock, its John Dewey, and, indeed, its Gloria Steinem, the Chairman [Mao] has radically altered the Chinese way of life." *Newsweek*

"Dissidents are brought firmly into line in China but, one suspects, with great politeness. It is a firmly authoritarian society in which those in charge smile and say please." *John Kenneth Galbraith*

"The elimination of those conditions [graft] in China is so striking that negative aspects of the new rule fade in relative importance." *Barbara Tuchman*

"Whatever the price of the Chinese Revolution, it has obviously succeeded not only in producing more efficient and dedicated administration, but also in fostering high morale and community of purpose. . . . The social experiment in China under Chairman Mao's leadership is one of the most important and successful in human history." *David Rockefeller*

The new Maoist man is "a new being born out of chaos, and endowed with moral qualities such as [have] never been seen before." *Harrison Salisbury*

The well-seasoned journalist Salisbury also allowed that he was deeply moved by the students who sang and danced to such stirring favorites as "Chairman Mao Has Sent Us Revolutionary Seed," "The Song of the Pig Breeders," and "Happy Is He Who Drives the Night Soil Cart."

The point of noting these and other perceptions, now seen to be obviously wrongheaded and misguided, is not to ridicule those who made them, but to inquire into their cause. Why did so many talented, intelligent, and worldly people go so far astray? A complete answer would go beyond the confines of even Mosher's valuable book, but it would include the following considerations, in different proportions for different people and different professions.

There was a manifest desire to see "idealistic," even utopian, plans brought to fruition. China's leaders exploited this desire by concealing much and graciously offering to guide their "guests" through a packed, carefully prepared schedule. The visitors innocently colluded with those leaders to accept the selected aspects of the society exposed to them as the whole, to ignore evidence contrary to their expectations, and to exaggerate the significance of minor happy incidents. (A driver refuses a tip and, behold, we see the new Maoist man, devoid of greed.) There was also a degree of alienation from one's own country—capitalist, bourgeois, class-riven, vice-ridden, and individualist to a fault—to which the New China provided an uplifting alternative.

More mundane considerations also operated: the natural urge to bring back exciting new stories, the reluctance to insult or embarrass the gracious host who lavished such attention on his visitors, the fear of doing or saying anything that would damage the possibility of being invited back in. (The academic who had been permitted into China, for example, had a decided leg-up on his colleagues who could not yet speak and write from such personal experience.) There was also involved, finally, a faulty view of human nature and its potential for being perfected, the ancient dream of replacing the Old Adam with the New Man.

These formed the preconditions for the self-deception practiced by so many visitors. Evidence of famine, starvation, and mass violation of human rights was available before and during the 1970s influx of visitors. Such evidence was ignored or slighted because it came from refugees (unrepresentative, prejudiced), scholars (inadequate evidence, not first-hand observations), and journalists (politically biased). During the period of infatuation with the New China, messengers

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

who arrived with unpalatable views were not welcome at the table of "enlightened" discussion.

A small personal note here. During the 1970s, when I was editor of *Worldview* and the sainted editor-in-chief of this journal was senior editor, we tried to get estimates from China-watchers of the approximate number of Chinese who had lost their lives under Mao's regime. We finally gave up. Few scholars wanted to give public estimates, many acknowledging that they did not want to endanger their chances of obtaining a Chinese visa. We then published a three-part series, "The Other China," by Miriam and Ivan D. London. Their sober and scholarly study revealed the dark side of China—hunger, famine, begging, financial speculation, robbery, prostitution, murder—as contrasted with the bright surface displayed in most contemporary presentations. Many readers were impressed with their findings, but a number of China-watchers condescendingly rejected their work and continued on their oblivious way.

ONLY LATER, when the Londons' findings were confirmed by China's leaders, did these China-watchers alter their public views. Some executed smooth U-turns without acknowledging that they had changed course. Others, such as Theodore White, Ross Terrill, Orville Schell, and Michel Oksenberg, admitted the error of their earlier observations. A few neither changed nor acknowledged the need to do so.

Foremost among the latter group is John K. Fairbank, for many years regarded as "dean of Sinologists." A prolific author and an influential teacher, he has maintained his exalted reputation in spite of a long record of misjudgments and misleading statements. Fairbank himself has offered a partial explanation for his record. Mosher quotes him: "I was committed to viewing 'communism' as bad in America but good in China. . . . The question was whether we could import it [special knowledge of Chinese society] to our fellow specialists (in the sense of understanding the cultural-social differences). It was a tall order but the only way to keep American policy on the right track."

One might question whether keeping American policy on any particular track is the responsibility of a scholar. But Fairbank took on his self-imposed assignment with alacrity, in the process offering his fellow citizens a remarkable series of judgments.

Two weeks after the arrest in 1976 of the Gang of Four, who fought to don Mao's mantle, Fairbank asserted that "Ford vs. Carter is a more naked power struggle than anything going on in Beijing. . . . By calling the conflict between Beijing policy makers a 'power struggle' we . . . cut down dedicated revolutionaries . . . to the size of ambitious individualists we know well. . . ."

In the early seventies Fairbank suggested that "Americans may find in China's collective life today an ingredient of personal moral concern for one's neighbor that has a lesson for us all."

While China's leaders have themselves described the Cultural Revolution as a "catastrophe," a decade of tyranny and bloodshed, Fairbank, in a book published in 1987, asserted that the Revolution "had a bad press outside China," and found its rationale in the traditional mistrust of the Chinese peasant for the educated elite. When the element of hooliganism is strained out of the Revolution, he concluded, we are left with "violence in the name of virtue, which others report as typical of the Cultural Revolution." Typical, too, of the Reign of Terror in revolutionary France.

FAIRBANK further reported that "individualism is still a dirty word in the people's republic," and seemed content that it should remain so, explicitly denying that human rights is a concept appropriate to China's society.

Writing in the *New York Review of Books* in September 1990, Fang Lizhi, the well-known dissident, noted that the early sixties, in the years immediately following the Great Leap Forward, China experienced one of the greatest famines in over two thousand years, one that took the lives of approximately 25 million people. In *The United States and China*, Fairbank's survey history of modern China, his entire comment on famine during the period reads thus: "Malnutrition was widespread and some starvation occurred."

Such marvels of scholarship, truth-telling, and judgment would long ago have dimmed a name less lustrous than John K. Fairbank's, but when a Chinese group named Human Rights in China produced *Children of the Dragon*, a photographic story of the Tiananmen Square massacre, it was he who was invited to write the preface. Nothing in that preface could be read as a retraction or corrective of his past comments on human rights and China, except perhaps for his enlightening statement that "Eastern Europe has now shown us [that] modern government requires popular participation in policy making."

Not incidentally, *Children of the Dragon* carries Fang Lizhi's vigorous repudiation of the idea that human rights is an alien concept for China. The idea that China has its own standards of human rights—which is what Fairbank argued—reminds Lizhi of the eighteenth-century ruler who declared that "China has its own astronomy." Lizhi insists that the Chinese people "must enjoy the same inalienable rights, dignity, and liberty as other human beings."

China Misperceived is an informative, highly readable book that does not demand specialized knowledge on the part of the reader. It underlines the importance of the work of people such as the Londons, people willing to press against the tide of popular and critical opinion. It does not offer a full analysis of how and why John

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

K. Fairbank, now understood as a symbol for those whose misconceptions formed part of that tide, operated as he did, or why he continues to enjoy great prestige—nor has any other book. Such a book too would be well worth reading.

BRIEFLY NOTED

Ungodly Women: Gender and The First Wave of American Fundamentalism. By Betty A. DeBerg. *Fortress Press. 165 pp. $9.95 paper.*

DeBerg of Valparaiso University makes the argument that the "first wave" of fundamentalism, around the turn of the century, is in fact the progenitor of today's "religious right" with respect to the "gender agenda." The argument is against some historians who have suggested that the current focus on abortion and family values, together with a willingness to cooperate with Roman Catholics in the public arena, is something new in conservative Protestantism. The author has no difficulty in finding examples of enthusiasm for "muscular Christianity" in the earlier period. On the other hand, she does not argue but merely assumes that the accenting of the masculine in religion is very bad. This seems not to take very seriously the many scholars, men and women, who worry about the "feminization" of culture, and of religion in particular. But her limited point, that the "gender agenda" is not something entirely new in conservative Protestantism, is securely made.

The Church With Aids: Renewal in the Midst of Crisis. Edited by Letty Russell. *Westminster/John Knox Press. 223 pp. $10.95 paper.*

Some of the stories told here, by people with AIDS and by people working with people with AIDS, are quite affecting. Regrettably, editor Russell, a prominent feminist/womanist theologian, and most of the fourteen contributors take for granted that "acceptance" of gay/lesbian lifestyles is a mark of the new Christian orthodoxy. The result is that the book has less to do with "renewal" than with familiar agitations in the culture wars. That is a pity, for there is an important and less simple-minded story to be told about the various ways in which the churches are responding to the AIDS crisis.

Religio Medici etc. By Thomas Browne. *Sherwood Sugden. 392 pp. $14.95 paper.*

Of this seventeenth-century moral reflection Dr. Johnson wrote, "The *Religio Medici* was no sooner published than it excited the attention of the publick, by the novelty of paradoxes, the dignity of sentiment, the quick succession of images, the multitude of abstruse allusions, the subtlety of disquisition, & the strength of language." Sir Thomas Browne's prose is not as strong as Dr. Johnson's (whose is?) but the book lives up to the description. The publishers bring out this reprint without so much as adding a foreword, which suggests that there is something a little offbeat about Sherwood Sugden. There is. Their list is mainly Roman Catholic, mainly conservative, and not a little eccentric. (Christopher Dawson, M. E. Bradford, Christopher Derrick, George Rutler, Hilaire Belloc, etc.) For a complete account of their offerings, write 315 Fifth Street, Peru, Illinois 61354.

A New Creation: America's Contemporary Spiritual Voices. Edited by Roger S. Gottlieb. *Crossroad. 383pp. $18.95 paper.*

The subtitle suggests that these are America's contemporary spiritual voices. It seems a certainty, however, that 90 percent of Americans have never heard of most of the thirty-four contributors. For instance: Mantak Chia, Ram Dass, Blu Greenberg, Chungliang Al Huang, Aryeh Kaplan, J. Krishnamurti, and Dhyani Ywahoo. The more attentive public might be familiar with names such as Matthew Fox, E. F. Schumacher, Henri Nouwen, and Starhawk. But the book does make an intriguing potpourie of New Age enthusiasms, gay/lesbian liberationisms, and feminist death-of-the-father-god extravagances. "Coming out," writes feminist/womanist theologian Carter Heyward, "we are calling public attention to what we so strongly believe to be true." Indeed. "Look at me!" as some people started saying at age three and now say in books. It is exceedingly tiresome, this chorus of self-declared "creativity" in generating new "spiritualities." Nonetheless, Brother David Steindl-Rast says on the back cover that this is an important book that helps us to turn from "the truths out there with their rival claims" to "the inner Truth of who we really are." Brother David Steindl-Rast is one of the contributors. With earlier books, editor Gottlieb made a mark of sorts as a Marxist theoretician. In promoting the debased gnosticism of the goddess of The Inner Truth, he has once again placed himself, he seems touchingly convinced, at the cutting edge.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Richard John Neuhaus

The Public Square

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

More on the Gulf

In our March issue, George Weigel offered a comprehensive, incisive, and, it must be admitted, devastating examination of "The Churches and War in the Gulf." In times of war, it has been said, truth is the first casualty. There is something to that. But times of great national moment can also be moments of truth. The Gulf war has been such a moment in illuminating the moral corruption of much religious witness and activism in our public life.

Our concern is not whether religious leaders opposed or supported U.S. policy in the Gulf. People of intelligence and integrity can disagree on such matters. Our concern is with the integrity of religious witness. It has been widely commented that this writer, in the *Wall Street Journal* and elsewhere, has "endorsed the administration's policy in the Gulf." That is not true. We have tried, with painstaking care, to put that policy to the tests posed by traditional just war theory. We concluded that, on its stated terms, that policy satisfied those criteria of justice.

It was clearly stipulated, "This use of force could turn out to be a tragic mistake. God only knows." That a cause is just does not necessarily mean that, in a fallen creation, that cause will prevail. The application of just war criteria requires prudential decisions about contingent facts, what we ordinarily refer to as judgment calls. There were numerous and unanswerable questions about what U.S. policy would actually mean in practice—in terms of casualties, collateral damage to other nations, and the politics of the Middle East. With respect to such contingencies, this writer declined to pit his relatively uninformed judgments against the prudential judgments of those who exercise legitimate political authority in this representative democracy. He declined not simply because they represent legitimate political authority, but because there was good reason to trust their judgment calls with respect to the nature and consequences of military action.

The late Paul Ramsey insisted that religious leaders must adopt "self-denying ordinances" if they are to have anything to contribute to public moral discourse and maintain their own credibility. They cannot indulge themselves by popping off about anything and everything in the name of "moral concern" or "religious insight" and still expect to be taken seriously. Weigel amply documented the indulgence, to the point of hysteria, that marked most oldline Protestant pronouncements on the eve of the allied military response to Iraq's aggression.

Most of those pronouncements were ideologically driven outbursts of "functional pacifism." Not real pacifism, mind you. Real pacifism frequently possesses a moral integrity and intellectual weight that is a necessary challenge to the just war tradition. Functional pacifism is the selective pacifism of political convenience. It explains how the same people can root for the violence of the most morally dubious "liberation struggles" all over the world while, at the same time, demanding that we "Make Love Not War" when it comes to U.S. military action in a just cause.

We have surely not seen each and every statement made by religious leaders about the justice or injustice of the allied response. We have examined dozens and dozens of them, however. Particularly impressive were some of the comments issuing from the National Association of Evangelicals, and a statement of notable *gravitas* and self-restraint by President Ralph Bohlmann of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. As we read them, these and other statements neither opposed nor endorsed administration policy. They took account of the seriousness of the situation, the solemn stakes involved, the relevant criteria of justice, the basis of reasonable confidence in our national leaders, and then called people to courage, patience, and prayer.

In these weeks, we have been impressed by how difficult it is to get people to understand the difference between a moral judgment and a judgment about contingent facts. In the minds of many, it seems that a "moral statement" is a statement on something about which one feels very strongly. It becomes a moral statement by turning up the volume, so to speak. "We are not making a political

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

statement," church bureaucrats and bishops declare, "we are making a moral statement." And so we were awash in "moral statements" about innumerable matters of fact and speculation where it may reasonably be assumed religious leaders have no special competence. At least not as religious leaders. Nonetheless, statements typically began with "We, as religious leaders" and then went on to propose, condemn, urge, etc.

"There is an obligation to help another nation resist military aggression." That is a moral statement. "President Bush declares UN resolutions will be enforced without protracted war." That is a statement of contingent fact. The religious leader who might make the first statement has no particular competence to comment on the latter, unless of course he is convinced that the President is misinformed or a liar. If he is saying that the policy is misinformed, he is obliged to produce better counter-information, which seems unlikely. If he is saying that those in charge are liars, he is, absent convincing evidence, indulging in slander.

Many of the religious protests against U.S. policy in the Gulf were not only unwarranted judgments about contingent facts but, upon closer examination, at least implicit judgments about the character of those responsible for that policy. A nasty streak, an absence of humility, indeed an overweening hubris, became evident in much of the protest. We expect that there are people in the White House, the Congress, the Pentagon, and many in the field of battle who pray that God forgives the religious leaders who judged them so harshly, so ignorantly, and so self-righteously.

Weigel's article paid special attention to the role of Roman Catholic leadership. One reason for that is because Catholicism has claimed something of a proprietorial interest in just war theory. He might have mentioned other examples of Catholic failures in this great moment of national testing. At the time of writing he did not have, for instance, the statement of the board of the U.S. Jesuit Conference, which is composed of the major superiors of 4,700 Jesuits in this country.

A few days before the allied response on January 16, the Jesuits wrote the President that the response did not meet the "last resort" test of just war theory. "More time, much more time, is needed before it can be credibly claimed that the UN sanctions and various diplomatic initiatives have failed. Indeed, some obvious diplomatic initiatives have not even been tried," they declare. Unfortunately, they did not specify what other resorts were so obvious to Jesuits that lesser mortals failed to see. Nor did they apparently feel any responsibility even to address the objection that more time would have strengthened the hand of Saddam Hussein, a manifestly ruthless international outlaw. It was enough, it seems, that they declared themselves for maintaining the "peace" of Iraq's brutal aggression. (It is remarkable how many calls to "pray for peace" overlooked the fact that a state of war existed as of August 2 with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.)

The Jesuits also told the President: "We fear that decisions on your part which ignore the points we have raised will, in the long run, not be supported by the American people. Certainly we could not support them." This is among the smarmiest passages in the protest statements that have come to our attention. Being translated, it says, "Mr. President, we fear that the American people will not support you, and we intend to do all that we can to make sure they don't." After informing Mr. Bush that he is morally forbidden to do what he seemed to be preparing to do, the letter concludes with the assurance of Jesuit prayers for the exercise of his "awesome responsibilities." Thanks a lot, Fathers.

Then there is the Catholic bishop (charity requires that he not be named) who wrote a public letter to Senator Edward Kennedy. He begins, "I write this letter to you, not knowing to whom else I can turn." One pauses to ponder all those to whom, it would seem, a troubled bishop might turn when, as he says, he feels "a particular fear growing within me." His fear is one that placed him in solidarity with the position at the time of the Democratic majority in Congress, and of that majority's most leftward leader in the Senate, Edward Kennedy. The bishop opposes military action "on January 15 or, for that matter, any other date within months, if not years, of that deadline." The bishop also fears President Bush's call for national unity. The consequences for our democracy, he fears, will be catastrophic. "The President's call for unity is specious," the bishop tells the Senator and the world. "It is in reality a demand that we abandon our own judgment, conviction, and, at least in some cases, moral principles for the sake of going along." So now you know what this President is really up to. We trust the ACLU and other defenders of our precious liberties have taken note.

Truth is a frequent, if not the first, casualty of war. But this war has highlighted some unsavory truths about certain styles of religious leadership. The first casualties of that leadership's inept efforts to address the cardinal virtue of justice were the three other cardinal virtues of prudence, temperance, and fortitude.

FT

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AFTER THE END OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

Pope John Paul II is scheduled to visit Hungary this August. The country is about 60 percent Roman Catholic and 20 percent Protestant, mainly Reformed but with smaller groups of Lutherans and others. The Reformed Church is going through major convulsions. Leaders above the level of parish pastor are being forced to resign for their collaboration with the former Communist regime. Aspects of the "renewal movement" are also troubling, however. For instance, Reformed activists, backed by some new leaders, are threatening to disrupt the Pope's visit by preventing him from moving around freely or presiding at public services. Clashes, probably violent clashes, between Protestants and Catholics are expected.

This is a striking reminder of how distinctive is the ecumenical situation in the United States—a situation reflecting, of course, long-standing habits of democratic pluralism. The expected conflict in Hungary will certainly not be the last such reminder. The Revolution of 1989 lifted the lid on long-suppressed hostilities, including religious hostilities, in Central and Eastern Europe. The wars between Reformation and Counter-Reformation and between Catholic and Orthodox, suspended by the oppression of the Soviet empire, can now be resumed. Americans should be no under no illusions that we can easily impart to Christians in the East what we have learned through ecumenism. Their situations are different in maddeningly diverse ways.

What is called the ecumenical movement was launched in 1910 in Edinburgh and was essentially an enterprise involving Protestants of like mind and culture, although with significant Orthodox participation. The movement was fundamentally changed by the ecumenical turn of the Roman Catholic Church at the Second Vatican Council. Another change of recent decades has been the difficult process of incorporating the "new churches" in former colonies and other poor countries. The ecumenical movement has been singularly unsuccessful in including evangelicals and fundamentalists, who constitute, along with Roman Catholics, the rapidly growing sectors of the Christian movement. Now Eastern Europe presents a new time of testing.

The World Council of Churches, based in Geneva, is the institutional center of the ecumenical movement dating from 1910. By sheer force of habit and by the continued funding of the oldline Protestant churches in Western Europe and North America, the WCC will continue. But it seems that it will be increasingly irrelevant to the tasks of ecumenism in the future. The WCC was politically "radicalized" in the 1960s, and its subsequent efforts to include the "third world" were typically accompanied by support for leftist regimes and ideologies that are now discredited.

The radical turn, both politically and theologically, resulted in a pronounced cooling of relations with Catholicism. Rome and Geneva today are barely on speaking terms, with the former investing its ecumenical energies in "bilateral" relations with other particular churches. Throughout vast areas of the world where evangelicalism is burgeoning, the "established" churches of the ecumenical movement are generally viewed as the enemy. As if all that were not enough, the WCC is tainted by deep complicity with the regimes of the former Soviet empire. For forty years, the WCC received major funding through their puppet churches and served, more often than not, as a Western apologist for Communist oppression.

These are hard judgments, but they are based on hard realities. In the course of its history the ecumenical movement as embodied in the WCC was confronted by four great challenges and opportunities—Roman Catholic ecumenism, independent churches in the post-colonial era, the evangelical resurgence, and the persecuted churches under Communism. The WCC has bungled every one. What began with such high promise at Edinburgh in 1910 has ended in a shambles. The claim that the WCC might be the instrument for bringing together the Christians of the world is today little more than pathetic. Of the 1.4 billion Christians in the world, well over a billion belong to churches that are unrelated to the WCC and are frequently overt in their suspicion or hostility to what it represents.

As Christianity survived and flourished after the passing of official Christendom, so one may hope that ecumenism will more than survive the death of the ecumenical movement. Whether that will happen depends chiefly upon Roman Catholics and evangelicals. If David Barrett's figures are to be trusted—and he is thought to be the state of the art statistician on these matters—there are over 900 million Catholics and 250 million evangelicals in the world. Especially in Eastern Europe, the Orthodox are also crucial. These communions do not agree on many things, not even on the goal of ecumenism. For Rome, the goal is nothing less than full communion. Many others fear that Rome understands that to mean that everyone must "return" to Rome on Rome's terms. Almost everyone recognizes that full communion among *all* Christians is an eschatological concept that will not be realized before Christ returns in glory.

For evangelicals, or at least for those who have given ecumenism a thought, the goal is peaceful cooperation and competition within the framework of full religious freedom. That may not seem like a terribly ambitious goal, until we look at the actual state of relations between Christians, not least in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Eastern Europe. We will no doubt have many occasions to look at those relations in Eastern Europe; to look with alarm, and with the prayer that the biblical truth of "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all" will yet find firmer and fuller expression than it did in the ecumenical movement that so egregiously failed.

FT

Try Saying No

The Human Genome Project has previously come in for attention in these pages. It is a multi-billion-dollar government-financed effort to track, remedy, and maybe transform the genes of which we are all made. For people who have given it more than a moment's thought, HGP is fraught with spooky possibilities. For those who are most nervous about it, the required cautionary text is C. S. Lewis' *The Abolition of Man*. Famed scientist James Watson, who is in charge of HGP, tells us not to worry, however. He assures us that the budget includes millions of dollars to hire state-of-the-art ethicists who will do the requisite moral handwringing while the project proceeds apace.

Gilbert Meilaender of Oberlin College, a frequent contributor to this journal, isn't buying. "Proceed with caution," he says, is not good moral advice in every case. "Attempting to hold before us a yellow caution light, it in fact allows us to proceed with a good conscience." We should at least entertain the possibility that with some things we should not proceed at all. We human beings are so enamored of the importance of freedom that we forget that it might be possible for us to be free to do some things "that will destroy something as essential to our humanity as freedom is." Put differently, we have the freedom to destroy our capacity to be free. In the above-mentioned essay, Lewis argues that efforts to remake humanity result in "one dominant age which resists all previous ages most successfully and dominates all subsequent ages most irresistibly, and thus is the real master of the human species." Lewis observes, "There neither is nor can be any simple increase of power on Man's side. Each new power won *by* man is a power *over* man as well."

The Latin *hybrida*, Meilaender observes, refers to the offspring of a wild boar and a domestic sow. The word has deeper connections, however, with the Greek *hubris*, meaning insolence against the gods. He quotes Lewis Thomas, the medical scientist and superb essayist: "This is what the word has grown into, a warning, a code word, a shorthand signal from the language itself: if man starts doing things reserved for the gods, deifying himself, the outcome will be something worse for him, symbolically, than the litters of wild boars and domestic sows were for the Romans." But Meilaender sees that Thomas, too, finds it hard to say No. "Like a good modern, Thomas is more fearful of sloth than pride—more fearful that we may leave unexplored some potential for good than that we may exercise our freedom in ways that are finally destructive of our humanity."

Freedom undoes freedom. Meilaender comments on the argument of Barbara Katz Rothman that prenatal diagnosis, for example, offers a woman "the illusion of choice" while actually depriving her of choice. "The technology of prenatal diagnosis has redefined the meaning of motherhood: it is making it difficult to commit oneself to an unborn child whose diagnosis is not yet assured; it is making it increasingly difficult to exercise one's freedom not to abort if the diagnosis is a bad one; it is encouraging women to think of their child as a product for whose quality they must accept responsibility; and it is making it more difficult to deal with disorders and afflictions that are not within our control and must simply be accepted. Rothman's is a powerful argument; more freedom has turned out to be less."

Already, Meilaender writes, there are rumblings from insurance companies that pregnant women must agree to abort if prenatal diagnosis indicates a severely defective fetus. Such pressures will almost certainly increase. These developments "express and encourage an attitude that opposes not disease and disorder but the diseased and afflicted human being." Apologists for the HGP point up its potential value in correcting a particular gene-related defect in the individual. But of course it goes beyond that. With the best of intentions, it gets into the alteration of genes and thus shapes the nature of generations to come. Meilaender writes, "Not only a human being but humankind is then the object of our intervention."

Meilaender is no scientific Luddite. He affirms seeking new knowledge about our genes and developing therapies for genetic orders that afflict many people. "But we should turn against disease, not against those who are diseased. And we should focus our therapeutic efforts on particular afflicted human beings, not on humankind." It is not clear to Meilaender nor, for that matter, to many in the scientific community that the HGP is the best way of pursuing these ends. What is clear is that those in charge of the project show little awareness of the ominous risks they are running. Dr. Watson in particular evidences a scientific insouciance, an onward-and-upward recklessness, that is nothing short of chilling. There is slight comfort to be drawn from the assurance that he is buying the advice of the best ethicists available. His attitude toward those who raise the serious moral questions seems to be, "Inhibit me if you can." At most his ethicists are likely to respond, "Proceed with caution." Needed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

are people who have a proven record of being able to say No.

FT

ANOTHER CONSPIRACY

Fundamentalists Anonymous (F.A.) is a New York-based organization that was started up five years ago by Richard Yao and James Luce. Its purpose is to rescue people from the fangs of fundamentalist religion. (Yao went to Yale Divinity School, which is known to have strange effects on some people.) When the founders advertised in the *Village Voice*, they discovered their idea was a big hit. Phil Donahue loved it.

F.A. claims to have 60,000 members in fifty states. In its recent hard-hitting fundraising appeals, F.A. says that the IRS, the Postal Service, and a cabal in the U.S. Senate are trying to do the organization in. One appeal contends that America is in danger of becoming a "Fundamentalist theocracy" by the year 2000, with "the kind of intolerance and mindset that has gripped Iran." The evidence is that Jack Kemp is in the cabinet, and James Baker's wife has organized prayer meetings in the White House. F.A. notes that the "experts" say it can't happen here, but then adds that the "experts" also thought "Hitler could not carry out his program."

A conspiracy of "Fundamentalist Catholics, reactionary Mormons, Fundamentalist Jews, Moonies, and secular extremists . . . already have a working majority on many issues." But not to despair. Unless you're one of the "wimpy, whiny, or timid people," you can give a thousand dollars a year and become an F.A. Freedom Fighter. As such, you get "battle" reports that other members have not seen and a Freedom Fighter ID card. If F.A. really does have any members, and if it keeps going on this way, it's only a matter of time and we'll be hearing about some folks organizing F.A.A. Little chance that they'll get on Phil Donahue's show, however.

FT

WHAT THE LAW IS ABOUT

Before saying what is so very fine about this book, we must enter a strong caveat. The book is by Graham Walker, a political scientist at the University of Pennsylvania, and it is called *Moral Foundations of Constitutional Thought: Current Problems, Augustinian Prospects* (Princeton). But first, we should get the caveat out of the way. In surveying representative positions on the question of law and morality, Walker mistakenly portrays Judge Robert Bork as a "skeptical nihilist." A skeptical nihilist is somebody who believes that the good has no reality. It is simply a word that people apply to their preferences and interests. Since there is no good, objectively speaking, Bork, according to Walker, thinks that questions of morality should be left entirely to the power struggles and deliberations of the political process.

At this point we should declare interest, as the lawyers say. Robert Bork is a dear friend and we bridle at his being misrepresented. More disinterestedly, he is a major referent in current thinking about the nature of law in a democratic society and it is therefore important to get his argument straight. To be fair to Graham Walker, some earlier essays by Bork, on which he chiefly relies, can easily be misunderstood as advocating something like skeptical nihilism. (Walker wrote his book before the appearance of Bork's massively influential *The Tempting of America*.)

Like many others, however, Walker mistakes Bork's argument for "judicial restraint" as an argument against moral reflection. Bork is not opposed to moral philosophy, and he readily recognizes that our constitutional order is premised upon moral principles. He simply thinks that judges make lousy philosophers, are not paid to be philosophers, and, when in the "judicial activism" mode, disguise their political preferences as moral discernment. In fact, Graham Walker's argument ends up on the side of judicial restraint in a manner not entirely unlike Bork's.

That out of the way, *Moral Foundations* is a splendid book splendidly written. For a succinct and lucid exposition of Augustine's political philosophy, no better recent treatment comes to mind. Walker persuasively argues that most of the positions currently in play were anticipated by Augustine in his contentions with Aristotelians, Platonists, Manicheans, and sundry gnostics. He also demonstrates that today's disputes about the nature of law and morality are inevitably entangled with larger metaphysical and even theological issues. The Ronald Dworkins and Laurence Tribes of the world may protest that, but, whether one is a moral realist or a moral nihilist or somewhere in between, serious talk about law and concepts such as justice requires talking about the way reality really is.

Graham Walker is very much in the tradition of Reinhold Niebuhr, another Augustinian of note, in appreciating the tensions and ambiguities that attend any effort to understand the connections between law, politics, and the good. Walker writes: "If this kind of thinking suspends questions of political morality—and therewith constitutional theory—in stubborn tensions, we should not be surprised. Tensions like

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

these are ubiquitous in Augustine's thought (because he believes they are rooted in the condition of fallen humanity). . . . Augustine discerns in man the image of God that is fractured but not effaced. He finds man's freedom of will to be foreshortened but not foreclosed. He points us to the truth about being and goodness that our minds can truly glimpse but not fully capture. He hopes for a moral politics, while refusing a moralizing politics. He makes it hard to countenance a morally or religiously neutral state, and impossible to accept a theocracy. He regards law as embedded in goodness but distinct from it. He enables us to insist on real moral interpretation in law, and to insist also that it be circumspect and relative. He enables us to recognize the need for a proximate judicial restraint that absolutely cannot be absolute."

Good stuff, that. Despite the fact that the last sentence poses a problem. Walker has not entirely disenthralled himself of the idea of the judge as moral philosopher. Judges should indeed be moral philosophers enough to recognize the moral philosophy that undergirds the Constitution that they are to serve. They serve that Constitution by rearticulating the philosophy by which it is constituted. As Walker himself says, "We are not framers or ratifiers but rather subjects of the Constitution that they formulated; therefore, we cannot afford simply to dispense with the conventions of framers' intent if we are going to understand the meaning of the text, especially in its explicitly moral provisions." Others—Robert Bork, for example—are much more emphatic, and rightly so, about the importance of interpreting the Constitution according to "original understanding."

But the great achievement of Graham Walker's work is not so much that he authoritatively referees many current disputes in legal theory as that he illuminates the philosophical and moral context in which, knowingly or not, these disputes are conducted. Legal theorists, moral philosophers, theologians, and citizens who care about the foundations of the American experiment in ordered liberty have reason to read with care *Moral Foundations of Constitutional Thought.*

FT

Religion and What Passes for the News

People want a lot more news about religion than they're getting. At least that is the finding of a major national study conducted by Religious News Service (RNS) and funded by the Lilly Endowment. Note that in the interviews people were not alerted to the fact that the study had any religious connection. They were simply asked what kinds of news most interested them. Religion was way up there. Way ahead of gossip, the culture page, astrology, business, and sports. "Way ahead of sports?!" a colleague asked, incredulous. This colleague, be it known, is a sports freak with a special devotion to the Orioles, which we understand to be a baseball team in Baltimore. Devout Catholic though he is, we have no doubt that he would turn to the baseball standings before reading the story on the election of a new pope.

"If people said that they're more interested in religion than sports," he declared, "they're lying." But why should people lie about that? Surely in our culture of privatized religion it is more respectable to tell a stranger that you're very interested in sports than that you're very interested in religion. The overall results of this study are no doubt affected also by a gender difference, most women being less obsessed by sports than is our friend. (Most men, too, for that matter.) But back to the main point. Despite the high level of interest in religion news, consider the difference in coverage of religion and sports in both print and broadcast media. Fifty-to-one in favor of sports would be a very conservative estimate. If creatures from another planet were to get their information about life in America from the news media, it would come to them as a stunning surprise that more Americans attend church or synagogue *every week* than attend all professional sports events in an entire year.

There are a number of reasons why the media ignore the largest single pattern of voluntary associational behavior in our society. Studies by Rothman and Lichter have demonstrated the dramatic gap in religious belief and behavior between news executives and the general population. In addition, religion news is thought to be so upbeat as to be soporific. Good news is no news. Scandals—especially if they involve Fundamentalists or Catholics—get considerable coverage, as do theological battles leading to denominational breakups. Almost any public fight with the Pope is thought to be newsworthy. But that's about it.

Given this sorry failure of the news media, it's nice to be able to lift up a counter-example from time to time. *The Washingtonian* is a general interest magazine that in recent months has had Terry Eastland doing major articles on religion in the D.C. area. They are splendid articles about people, congregations, and other institutions doing remarkable things for unabashedly religious reasons. The articles expose the happy little secret that, for instance, nurses take care of crack babies and churches run hospices for the dying because, as odd as it may seem, they really do love God and want to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

serve him by serving his children. *The Washingtonian*, however, is the all too rare exception.

Complaints that religion does not receive enough news attention may be dismissed as self-serving. The Lilly-RNS study suggests, however, that readers and viewers earnestly do want more coverage of religion, and one would think that might make an impression on news executives who cannot be entirely indifferent to market dynamics. Religion gets along just fine without the coverage. There are no doubt many religious groups and leaders who prefer it that way. But if journalism is to make any pretense of representing the society—what matters to people and the institutions they care about—the ludicrously slight attention paid religion must be remedied. Did we mention that more than twice as many people are in church or synagogue every week than vote in presidential elections once every four years?

FT

TIMOROUS TEACHERS

A Roman Catholic bishop in the Northeast addressed a Virginia symposium on "The Wisdom of Women." We have only the text of what he said, but it seems he was terribly insecure, perhaps intimidated. He is disturbed that many Catholics are not listening to their bishops. "People say more often than I would like to hear, 'You do not understand sexuality in marriage' or 'We cannot possibly live up to that.' Further, many persons simply disengage from any conversation with us." The bishops need to listen more carefully to the people, says this bishop, and in principle one can hardly argue with that.

He continues: "Another issue that invites our careful listening involves the question of abortion, which is so troublesome and divisive in our nation. This is an issue which will challenge our pastoral sensitivity for years to come. My particular hope is that we will do a better job than we have done in hearing the women and men of our church on this issue. We will only be helped in our pastoral practice by hearing those who conceive and those who bear new life in their womb and who for whatever reason struggle with the question of whether or not they will carry that new life to full term. In my opinion, Archbishop Weakland's recent initiative in this regard was an important service to the church. Our ability to defend the life of the unborn will only be deepened when we expand that kind of respectful dialogue."

It is hard to know how Weakland-like exercises can strengthen efforts to "defend the life of the unborn." Archbishop Weakland (Milwaukee) issued a report on his listening sessions that was clearly sympathetic to those who dissent from church teaching on abortion, and harshly judgmental toward those in the prolife movement. (They are, charged the Archbishop, harshly judgmental.) Although Weakland definitely said that he did not dissent from church teaching, he seemed to invite the inference that he was only going along with what is canonically required of an archbishop. The most remarkable thing about the Weakland exercise, as Father James Burtchaell pointed out in *The National Catholic Reporter*, is that his long report included not one word in defense of the unborn.

There is a yet deeper nervousness evident in the bishop's address at the Virginia conference. It is a nervousness that marks much church teaching today, whether Roman Catholic or Protestant. It is a nervousness that results from an apparent inability to respond to the question, By what authority? "By what authority," people are asking the bishop, "do you presume to instruct us on sexual morality?" "You do not understand sexuality in marriage," they contend. The bishop, it seems, agrees with the challenge, or at least thinks there is truth in it. The challenge is that, on matters ethical, you have your opinion and I have mine, and only the person actually in the situation can know what is right for him or her.

That challenge is not simply to the church's teaching on this or that. It is a fundamental challenge to normative ethics, Christian or other. Clergy of almost all communions agree that there is a moral content to the Christian message, and that there are normative referents (Scripture, creed, etc.) by which moral teaching is determined. Roman Catholics, in addition, assert that bishops have a special duty, aided by a special charism, to teach that moral content. Listening carefully is indeed part of "pastoral sensitivity," as the bishop says. But if, as Catholics and most other Christians believe, the direct intention to take innocent human life is always wrong, one wonders what is to be learned from listening to those "who for whatever reason struggle with the question of whether or not they will carry that new life to full term."

By such listening we might better be able to understand why people are tempted to do wrong. But there is no hint that that is the learning that the bishop has in mind. The unavoidable implication is that the bishop is deeply bothered that abortion is "so troublesome and divisive in our nation," and that somehow the Catholic position is, at least in part, responsible for that trouble and division. The implied solution is not that the church's position should be more persuasively taught but that it should be corrected by "pastoral sensitivity" to those who reject that position. To be sure, a Catholic bishop who came right out and said that he disagrees with the church's teaching would be in deep trouble. One must in charity believe that the bishop does not, in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fact, disagree. But there can be no doubt that he is embarrassed by that teaching and intimidated by those who challenge it.

Of course the bishop is by no means alone in this respect. There are leaders in all the churches who relish being "bold" and "prophetic" in pronouncing on global debt, the inequities of a market economy, and the details of U.S. foreign policy, but become strangely reticent and "pastorally sensitive" when it comes to moral questions that impinge more directly upon how people order, or disorder, their everyday lives. Clergy, like most people, like to be liked. It is not always easy to remember that the One whom they are pledged to serve promised that faithfulness to the truth would be "troublesome and divisive." One would like to encourage this timorous bishop and others like him to entertain the possibility that, when a teaching is controverted, it may be a sign not that the teaching needs correction but that it is on to something very important.

FT

Numbers and the Numinous

We most definitely do not believe that the voice of the people is the voice of God. But that does not mean that polling research does not have its uses. Among other things, it can serve as a "reality check" against social generalizations too readily assumed to be true. Not, of course, that polls reveal *the* reality, but they at least give us pause in accepting other readings of reality. For instance, our parochial newspaper, the *Times*, was manifestly taken aback a little while ago when it did a national survey on family behavior. It turns out that something like 80 percent of respondents claim that they have dinner with their families at least five nights a week. Moreover, during dinner they do not watch television but, if you can believe it, *talk with one another.* The *Times* ran this as a very big story, since it ran directly counter to its editorial and news line of at least the last fifteen years, insisting that the "nuclear family" is an almost extinct species.

Among those who supply us with reality checks on what is happening in religion, none is so assiduous as George Gallup and his Princeton Research Center. Even the questions that may at first seem trivial are sometimes suggestive of larger patterns. For instance, how many American teenagers, do you suppose, said grace the last time they sat down for dinner with their families? The answer is 51 percent. Protestant young people say grace more than Catholics (60 percent to 48 percent), and non-white teens (59 percent) more than whites (49 percent). Of all teens, those who attended church in the last seven days are much more likely to say grace (72 percent) than those who didn't (30 percent).

Or consider this. Ask Americans which is their favorite holiday and 72 percent vote for Christmas. Thanksgiving comes in a very distant second with 8 percent. Easter gets a very meager 2 percent, one point behind the Fourth of July. There are many reasons why it is not surprising that Christmas comes in first. But only 2 percent for Easter? The overwhelming majority of Americans claim to be Christians, and for at least 1,500 years the Christian church has taught that the Feast of the Resurrection is the premier day of the year, around which all other feasts and festivals gravitate. (Pentecost, the third great feast of the Christian calendar, does not show up on the list of favorites.) To put it very gently, one may conclude that Christians in America do not rate holidays (holy days?) according to their theological significance. On the other hand, Easter church attendance is comparable to attendance on Christmas. So maybe it means that people do take Easter seriously, but they just don't enjoy it very much. (After all, they were asked about their "favorite" holiday, not the holiday that they thought most important to their faith. Had they been asked the latter question, however, we would not be surprised if Christmas still turned out to be the winner by far.)

Galluping along, we came across this item having to do with wealth and its distribution. In a national survey, 7 percent of respondents say they are upper income, 59 percent identify themselves as middle income, 23 percent lower income, and 10 percent as poor. Although they were given the choice, *no* respondents said they were rich. Seventeen percent admitted that they envied rich people, but 82 percent denied it. "All in all, if you had your choice, would you want to be rich, or not?" Fifty-nine percent say they would like to be rich, 38 percent say no, and 3 percent have apparently not thought about it (which suggests that they do not want to be rich, at least not very badly). It seems there are serious biblical inhibitions about wanting to be rich—"the eye of the needle" and all that. Nineteen percent think rich people have a harder time loving God and neighbor, 71 percent think riches make no difference, and 6 percent think everything, including spiritual well-being, goes better with more money. While they have little use for envy and generally have a high opinion of riches and the rich, 66 percent of respondents do say that wealth "should be more evenly distributed" (up from 60 percent in 1984).

What else in Mr. Gallup's most recent report? There has been a modest rebound over the last year in expressed confidence in organized religion (from 52 to 56 percent). But of major institutions in American society, the military is number one (68 percent), a position held by religion every year since 1973 except

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for three. There are reassurances here. Of the ten institutions named, television has the confidence of only 25 percent of respondents. Organized labor, Congress, and "Big Business," in that order, do even worse than television. Only 9 percent have high confidence in "Big Business," leaving us to wonder how people would respond simply to "Business." Big anything, we expect, sounds bad to most Americans.

While we're at it, so to speak, we might mention one more item. Twenty-four percent of Protestants say they read the Bible daily and 28 percent weekly. The parallel figures for Catholics are 7 percent and 16 percent. Yet only half of all respondents could name even one of the four gospels. Thirty-seven percent could name all four, down from 42 percent who could do that in 1982. Most of these data are clinching arguments for little, leaving us, as they do, with the half empty/half full question.

For instance, asked about family, almost all American adults who have had children say they would do it again if they had the choice. Only 4 percent could be called "anti-children": they have not had any and do not want any. Yet, asked to state in their own words why they have had children, Americans give answers that, without exception, might be construed as selfish ("The love and affection children bring," "Having the pleasure of watching them grow," etc.). Not too much should be made of that, however. In view of the open-ended and unconditional commitment involved in having children, it seems likely that most parents simply lack the vocabulary to express their nobler reasons. (Sociologist Brigitte Berger has plausibly proposed that an honest newspaper advertisement for the job of being a parent—24 hour duty, unqualified responsibility for another person for twenty years or more, no remuneration, financial commitment in the vicinity of $150,000, etc.—would draw no takers.)

But enough for now. Mr. Gallup serves us all by tracking data that are as suggestive as they are inconclusive, and we will from time to time revisit his findings.

FT

WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ As has frequently been noted, the oldline Protestant churches were, in the 1960s, in the forefront of endorsing "liberalized abortion." Eighteen years after *Roe v. Wade*, many people in those churches are having second and third thoughts. A "liberalization" that would allow for abortion in extreme circumstances has turned, much to their professed surprise, into the routinizing of abortion as contraception—at the rate of 1.6 million each year. They should not have been surprised, but that they are concerned is undoubtedly to their credit. An influential group of United Methodists, including some who understood the abortion tragedy from the start, have now issued "The Durham Declaration." Drawn up in Durham, NC, the declaration begins: "United Methodists, abortion is testing our church. Abortion is testing our church today as deeply as slavery tested our church in the nineteenth century." The declaration contains nine pledges to prayer and action, including these: "We pledge, with God's help, to teach our churches that the unborn child is created in the image of God and is one for whom the Son of God died. This child is God's child. This child is part of God's world. So the life of this child is not ours to take. Therefore, it is sin to take this child's life for reasons whether of birth control, gender selection, convenience, or avoidance of embarrassment. We pledge, with God's help, to become a church that hospitably provides safe refuge for the so-called 'unwanted child' and mother. We will joyfully welcome and generously support—with prayer, friendship, and material resources—both child and mother. This support includes strong encouragement for the biological father to be a father, in deed, to his child. We pledge, with God's help, to honor the woman who has, under difficult circumstances, carried her child to term." The commitment to support the mother and child is important, although it will not stop critics from saying that prolifers do not care about women in trouble. John Cardinal O'Connor of New York, for example, has repeatedly over the years pledged that the Archdiocese will spiritually and materially support any woman who asks for help in carrying her child to term. Many women have asked and many have been generously helped but, as the Cardinal ruefully notes, never once has this commitment of the Archdiocese been mentioned in the general media. (Those who wish to receive the Durham Declaration, especially United Methodists who might sign it, are invited to send a self-addressed stamped envelope and $1 to the Rev. Paul Stallsworth, Creswell UMC, Route 1, Box 272A, Creswell, NC 27928.)

■ We have often spoken of America being embroiled in a *Kulturkampf*. The term, of course, refers to Bismarck's efforts to reduce or eliminate the influence of Christianity, more specifically Catholicism, in German public life. Needless to say, that situation and ours are different in important respects but the term *Kulturkampf* serves very nicely. The above is by way of mentioning that Richard Schaefer of San Francisco writes that we should take note of Ludwig Windthorst, who died 100 years ago this spring. He was for many years the leader of the Center Party in Prussia and Bismarck's chief opponent. Barely five feet tall, crippled, and blind most of his adult life, Windthorst was considered the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

foremost parliamentarian of his time. He battled for ethnic minorities, opposed a growingly virulent anti-Semitism, and won a solid following among workers. Writes his biographer, Margaret Lavinia Anderson, "Within Catholic Germany . . . he was revered long after his death, and the *Windthorstbund*, established to keep his legacy green, was dissolved only by Hitler. Yet today, except among professional historians, the man is unknown." Now you know.

■ "*Salt* is the magazine for justice-hungry Christians." That's from a promotional mailing for a Catholic-based publication intent upon enlisting Christians to right the wrongs of the world. On the envelope is this: "INSIDE: HOW TO WORK SOCIAL JUSTICE INTO YOUR DAILY SCHEDULE plus A RISK FREE SUBSCRIPTION OFFER." It sounds like a pretty safe way to satisfy one's justice hunger.

Sources: On ecumenism and the WCC, *Lutheran World Information*, November 29, 1990. On Fundamentalists Anonymous, *Wig Wag*, October 1990. On Archbishop Weakland, *Origins*, December 20, 1990. Religious data in *emerging trends*, Vol. 12, No. 9.

storms

the wind's blown stars to powder in the sky's blue
so the morning's pale and clear, soft as breath,
those are storms' leavings,
these horizons swept clean.

    we fill, we empty
    we connect and retract
    and sometimes each dream, every cell
    has you in it.

i've had it both ways, been the rock, been its hollow
    (dreaming of light and translucence
    dreaming of sleep and its darkness)
and when the wind woke me, i saw you there blowing
and the clouds filled my vision
and my eyes lost the sun.
when the wind soothed me, my skin felt your hands,
a soft rain on dust, settling.

    we fill, we empty
    we blame and forgive
    and the storms unloose rocks,
    not a window survives.

my brother heard thunder, shale cliffs exploding
    (a desert child knows how a deluge begins.)
we'd run open windows as the doors slammed around us
and the rooms filled with hurricanes
and our bodies were lungs.

i tell other storms stories, of you, of us,
    we fill, yes, we empty
    we trust and suspect
    and sometimes, clear mornings,
    we wake lost and smiling

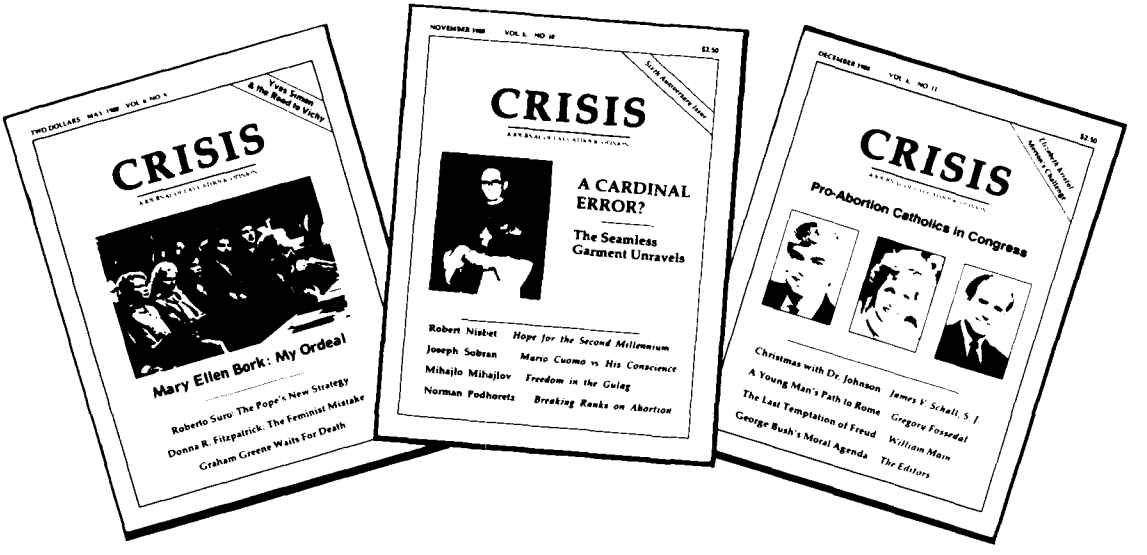
that night wind downed trees.
hail studs asphalt, the sky's shards.
and us? we're apocalypse, all big bang and thunder.
and then we're this quiet, this thick dust, this silence
we're this bare sky
this vision
this breath.

Donna Frazier

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SPECIAL CHARTER OFFER

Why not be part of America's new Catholic renaissance?


CRISIS
Mary Ellen Bork: My Ordeal
Roberto Suro: The Pope's New Strategy
Donna R. Fitzpatrick: The Feminist Mistake
Graham Greene Waits For Death
CRISIS
A CARDINAL ERROR?
The Seamless Garment Unravels
Robert Nisbet Hope for the Second Millennium
Joseph Sobran Mario Cuomo vs His Conscience
Mihajlo Mihajlov Freedom in the Gulag
Norman Podhoretz Breaking Ranks on Abortion
CRISIS
Pro-Abortion Catholics in Congress
Christmas with Dr. Johnson James V. Schall, S. J.
A Young Man's Path to Rome Gregory Fossedal
The Last Temptation of Freud William Main
George Bush's Moral Agenda The Editors

This is the Catholic moment. A time when more people are turning to the "faith ever ancient, ever new," in Augustine's phrase.

A time when Catholic principles can illuminate our public and private choices, and enrich the lives of all.

CRISIS is a lay Catholic monthly of news and opinion that is spearheading the new Catholic renaissance. We embody what G.K. Chesterton called a "dynamic orthodoxy," with a touch of Chestertonian humor.

News breaking reports. Lively, unpredictable analysis. Commentary from the best and brightest.

SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE ONLY $25.00

Call **1-800-CRISISS.**

Or send check to **Crisis,**
P.O. Box 1006,
Notre Dame, IN 46556

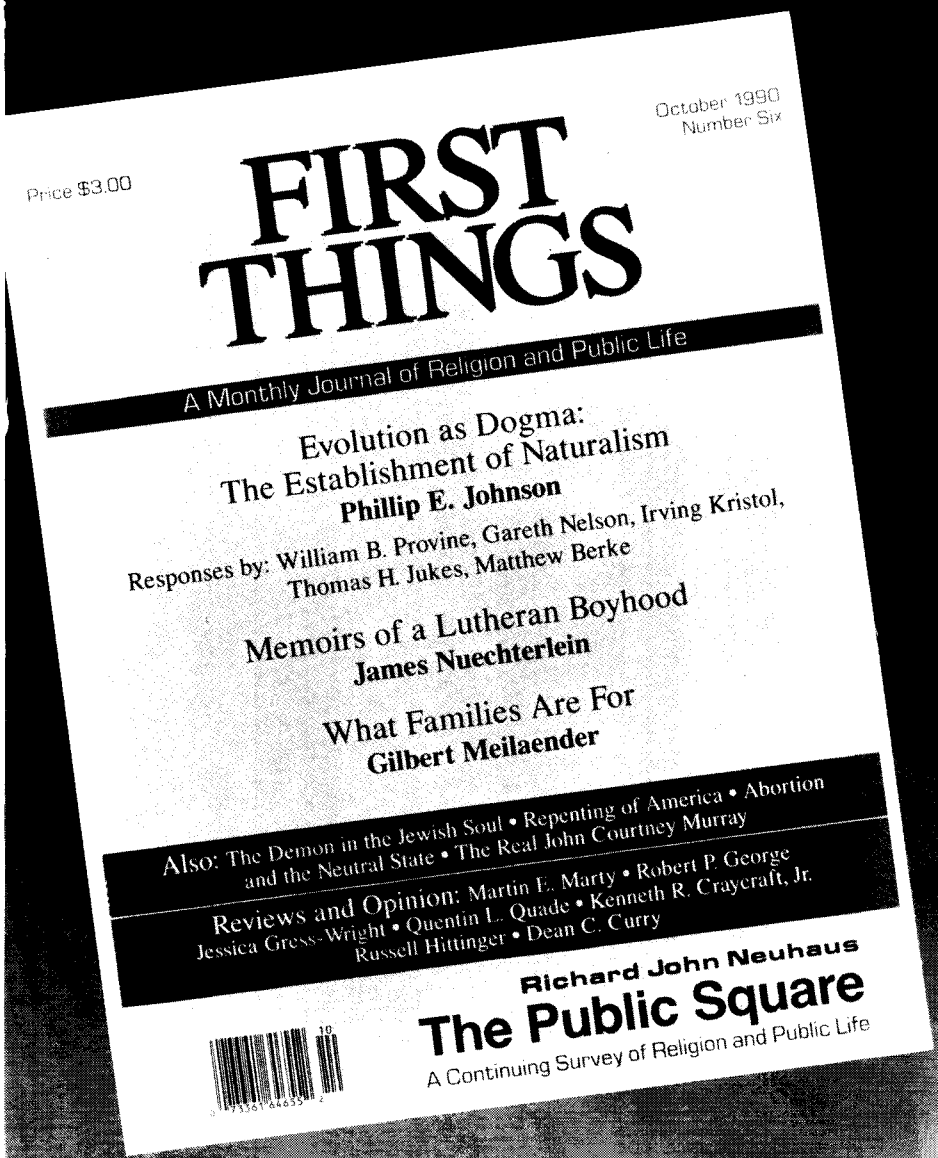
Please send me ☐ 1 year (11 issues) **$25.00** ☐ 2 years **$45.00**
Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

PAYMENT PREFERRED
☐ Check enc. ☐ MasterCard/Visa ☐ Please bill me
Name of Card _____
Account # _____
Expiration Date _____
Signature _____

CRISIS, P.O. Box 1006, Notre Dame, IN 46556

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

At last, a journal of ideas about religion and public life!


Price $3.00
October 1990
Number Six
FIRST THINGS
A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life
Evolution as Dogma:
The Establishment of Naturalism
Phillip E. Johnson
Responses by: William B. Provine, Gareth Nelson, Irving Kristol,
Thomas H. Jukes, Matthew Berke
Memoirs of a Lutheran Boyhood
James Nuechterlein
What Families Are For
Gilbert Meilaender
Also: The Demon in the Jewish Soul • Repenting of America • Abortion
and the Neutral State • The Real John Courtney Murray
Reviews and Opinion: Martin E. Marty • Robert P. George
Jessica Gress-Wright • Quentin L. Quade • Kenneth R. Craycraft, Jr.
Russell Hittinger • Dean C. Curry
Richard John Neuhaus
The Public Square
A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

"The debate about public policy is increasingly calling upon such formerly unfashionable notions as character and virtue and citizenship. The indispensable contribution of FIRST THINGS is to remind America's intellectuals that serious debate on these topics must confront the life of the spirit."

— **Charles Murray**
Author

"No magazine since the New York Review of Books appeared has elicited so much interest and favorable comment."

— **Mary Ann Glendon**
Harvard University

"In the welter of magazines specializing in the ephemeral, FIRST THINGS stands apart by living up to its name. It is unfailingly intelligent, graceful, and lucid."

— **Robert H. Bork**
American Enterprise Institute

Religion is breaking out all over! And FIRST THINGS is here to cover the story.

It's a story connected with some of the most troubling social issues of our time. It's a story stirring the most imaginative intellectual debates of our time.

It's the story found in the pages of FIRST THINGS.

At last there exists a publication that takes you to the heart of today's most critical religious and moral questions. From abortion to bio-ethics to church-state relations FIRST THINGS engages you in a lively and profound conversation about the ordering of our public life.

Discover religion's changing role in our public life by joining in this extra-ordinary new venture in publishing. Subscribe to FIRST THINGS today.

FIRST THINGS
Ideas for post-secular America

To start your subscription to FIRST THINGS, complete and mail one of the order cards bound into this issue, or send a check for $24 (10 issues) to:
FIRST THINGS, Dept. FT,
P.O. Box 3000, Denville, NJ 07834

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SOME PEOPLE WOULD PAY ANY PRICE FOR FREEDOM.

WE'LL GIVE IT TO YOU FOR LESS THAN $20.

Freedom. Democracy. Human Rights. Powerful words. Powerful concepts. People will do almost anything for them. In repressive countries. In newly formed democracies. In America. Read the stories you won't find in the news in Freedom Review.

Freedom Review follows the struggle for freedom. We bring you the famous and the not yet famous, the philosopher and the reporter, the poet and the activist to dramatize and analyze the fight for freedom in every country in the world. They offer a brilliant variety of perspectives on the crucial issues of our time and how they should be resolved.

Our writers are actively involved in promoting policies that enhance freedom. The often report violations directly from the field — in some cases, as they struggle for their own causes.

When freedom is threatened, Freedom Review is there.

We're asking you to fight for freedom. Support Freedom Review.

Subscribe today.

CALL: 212-473-9691

FREEDOM REVIEW

☐ I Don't want to miss any of the issues. Start my subscription today: ☐ 1 year $16.00 ☐ 2 years $32.00 ☐ 3 years $48.00 *(outside U.S. add $10.00 air postage)*

☐ Payment in U.S. is dollars enclosed. ☐ Charge my Visa / Mastercard *(circle one)* Card # _____ Exp. Date _____

Name _____ Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Country _____

To subscribe call 212-473-9691 or return the coupon with payment to: Freedom House, 48 East 21st Street, New York, NY 10160

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED